

ROGUES' HAVEN

ROY
BRIDGES



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Rogues' Haven

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DEAD MEN'S GOLD
THE BUBBLE MOON
THE FUGITIVE**

**HODDER & STOUGHTON, LIMITED,
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Rogues' Haven

BY

ROY BRIDGES

Author of

"The Bubble Moon," "The Vats of Tyre," etc.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED **LONDON**

To my friend
M. A. MINOGUE.

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BUT for the coach and pair carrying Mr. Bradbury to Chelton, Tony Vining and I would not have been haled before the Squire, but would have got off scot-free as any time before. Tony and I had made the round of our snares. Tony had poked a young rabbit into his jacket-pocket; I was carrying a hare in my bag, and we were sneaking homewards through the dusk, when Tim Kerrick, ash-plant in hand, and brace of keepers at heel, stepped out of the coppice.

“What be you lads doin’ here?” Tim demanded, barring our way. “You’re after no good, I’ll warrant. What’s in your bag, John Howe?”

I did not stay to answer. I swung round and was away. Tony raced off with me; old Tim and his keepers followed. We led them about the coppice, but they pressed us hard, Tim roaring, “Stop, ye young varmint! Stop! It’ll be all the worse for ye. Stop, I say!”

Dreading Tim’s ash-plant, we ran on with

all speed. The hare in the bag hung heavily on me ; when we were out in the furze, I let the bag slip from me, and ran more swiftly. I had need, for Tony was now well ahead, and Tim and the keepers were hot at my heels ; I could hear Tim's snorting as much for anger as the rigour of the chase. Furze tore my breeches and stockings ; as we took the bank above the road, a bramble almost led to my undoing ; it caught the tail of my jacket, and for the moment held me. Tim charged forward with a yell of triumph ; it was premature, for, kicking his toe against a root, he tumbled forward on his nose ; on the evidence of his curses he pitched headlong into the bramble. I tore myself away from the thorn, and dashed up the bank after Tony.

Down then we plunged into the road ; the keepers, not staying to help Tim to his feet, pressed closely on us. And as we shot down into the road, destiny in a coach and pair—to wit, Mr. Bradbury—encountered us. For scarcely were we on the road, and racing on, than with a flash of yellow lamplight through the dusk, cracking of whip, and rattle of wheels, the coach was driven round a bend in the way, blocking our path, and sending us up against the bank to save ourselves. Tony cried out,

for the horses almost trod him down ; instantly the pair took fright, and swerved to left. A wheel descending into a deep rut, the coach toppled over ; a horse fell, and the driver was lost in a swirl of dust, confusion of struggling, plunging horses and smashing vehicle. On this disaster we might have sped away ; no more than my curiosity, or maybe, desire to give a hand to the driver, held me there leaning against the bank and for the moment staring. But then I darted back with Tony, and caught at the bridle of the plunging horse ; by then the driver was the master of its fellow. Scarcely had we prevailed, than old Tim, cursing still, was upon us, roaring to his keepers, " Hold the young varmints ! Don't let 'em get away ! " Promptly the keepers had Tony and me as securely as we held the horse ; Tim was standing glowering at us, ash-plant quivering in his right hand, when out of the wrecked coach stepped Mr. Bradbury.

Now in the days to be from my first meeting with Mr. Bradbury the demeanour and the characteristics of the gentleman were to be stamped so vividly upon my mind that perhaps I write of him here with a detail beyond my perception in the dusk, for the light of the carriage lamps had been put out. I picture

him as a keen-faced gentleman,—then of sixty years of age,—as lean and stooping slightly ; his black cloak lined with white silk blowing out from his shoulders ; his long white hands striving now to secure it at his breast, and now to hold his hat upon his head. He would be wearing his coat of fine black cloth, black, flapped waistcoat, black silken breeches and black silken stockings, shining silver-buckled shoes, linen of superfine quality and whiteness,—I recall the glint of white jewels on his fingers. His hair was snow-white, and bound with a black ribbon ; his spectacles were as two owl-like eyes.

“ Ha-ha ! ” the gentleman exclaimed, observing Tony and me in the grip of the keepers. “ Whom have we here ? Gentlemen of the road ? ”—and chuckled in a dry, crackling way.

“ Poachers,—lads from the village, Mr. Bradbury, sir,” Tim growled, touching his hat. “ These young dogs has been poachin’, and I be goin’ to dust their jackets, as they’ve needed dustin’ many a day. ’Twas them as frightened the hosses, an’ nigh broke your honour’s neck and the lad’s there. You’ve took no hurt, sir, I hopes and trusts.”

“ None ! None ! ” Mr Bradbury answered, indifferently. “ But my driver—— ? ”

“ Well enough, sir, thank ’ee,” the fellow

said, busying himself with the traces of the fallen horse. "No thanks to these young rascals."

"Ay! Ay! I'll be walking on then to the hall," said Mr. Bradbury, glancing at the ruined coach. "And I'll leave you free, Tim Kerrick, to dust the jackets and whatsoever else of the attire of these lads as may occur to you." He chuckled again, and pulled his flapping cloak about him.

"The road's rough and broken with the rains, Mr. Bradbury," said Tim. "As like as not you'll be tumblin' into the ditch, or missin' your way. I'll send one of my lads with you. Hey, you Dick, have you your lantern there?"

"Yes, I've it here, Mister Kerrick," the keeper answered.

"Light it, lad, light it, and go along with Mr. Bradbury! Joe and me can finish our business with these varmint."

The keeper, relinquishing me to Tim's custody, lit his lantern, and stood forward to attend Mr. Bradbury, who, leaning on his cane, was scrutinising Tony and me.

"Show the light on this lad here," said Mr. Bradbury, suddenly, pointing to me. As the light flashed on me, Mr. Bradbury peered at me through his spectacles; his face expressed nothing of his thought; shamefaced I stood

before him. "What's your name, boy?" Mr. Bradbury demanded, sharply.

"John Howe, sir," I answered.

"Howe!—H'm—Kerrick!"

"Sir?" said Tim, touching his hat.

"Bring this lad to the Hall."

"After I've basted him, sir?"

"Let the penalty be suspended. Later, maybe. Jacket or breeches then, as you will," said Mr. Bradbury, chuckling. "Who's the other lad?"

"Parson's son, sir,—young Vining."

"Bring them both before Mr. Chelton at the Hall," Mr. Bradbury ordered. "It's only just that they should suffer equally, as Mr. Chelton thinks fit; one's as culpable as the other. Bring them both after me, Kerrick! Now, my man, go ahead with the lantern."

Wrapped in his cloak, hat pressed down over his brows, Mr. Bradbury went up the road, leaving Tim to curse, since justice and an overdue vengeance on our skins had been taken arbitrarily from his hands.

IT was dark long before Tony and I were marched up the drive to the Hall. The great house stood out a grey mass against the starry sky ; the windows fronting us were golden with light ; and light flowed from the open door and down the steps. I heard loud laughter ; the Squire had company, as he might any night of the week. He favoured fox-hunting gentlemen of a like pattern to himself, seasoned to drink under the table any gentleman of fashion and Tory out of session who should quit the Town for the hospitality of Chelton. Hearing the voices and the laughter, and seeing the blaze of light from the dining-room, I had little fear of the temper of Mr. Chelton, before whom Tony and I were presently to be haled. None the less, for the thought that the Squire might think fit to parade us before his company to provide sport for them, I would have begged Tim Kerrick to deal with us summarily ; I would have endured the ash-plant about me for all my seventeen years of age but that the sudden interest of Mr. Bradbury

had excited my natural curiosity. I pictured Mr. Bradbury standing by us, chuckling to himself, and his piercing look, while the lantern light was playing across my face ; and I recalled his queer, sharp tone when he ordered me to be brought on to the Hall. What should the gentleman want with me ? Squire's family lawyer, Tim told me, gruffly, in answer to my eager question. How we should fare with Mr. Chelton was of less concern.

I knew Mr. Chelton for a good-humoured gentleman. I did not fear that, though Tony and I had been found poaching on his preserves, the Squire would do worse than bid Tim Kerrick dress us down with his ash-plant. I did not dread committal, the Assizes and the terror of their Lordships, the Judges. Indeed, I believed that unseen I had dropped the hare out of sight in the furze ; and I took it that Tony had long since rid himself of the rabbit from his pocket. Only when we were before the house did I find the chance of a word with Tony. Tim, loosing his grip then, and staring up doubtfully at the door, as if not knowing whether or not to conduct us before the Squire and Mr. Bradbury immediately, I poked my head forward and whispered to Tony, " Did you get rid of that rabbit ? "

He whispered back, " No ! It's stuck in my

pocket ; ” but he could add nothing, for Tim gripped me instantly, and shook me, with the observation : “ No talkin’ ! If it’s the rabbit you’re thinkin’ of, it’s in his pocket yet, for I’ve felt it there. And I saw you drop the bag with, belike, another inside. So don’t go thinkin’ yourself clever, John Howe ! It’s gaol, or transportation, or at the very least a basting you’ve never felt the like of, and’ll never want to feel again. Squire’s at dinner. You’ll wait till Squire’s dined and wined, you will.”

With this cheerful augury Tim Kerrick propelled me before him, and the keeper following with Tony, we were marched about the house to the stables and into the harness-room. “ You’ll be safe and snug here,” Tim said, ere he turned the key upon us, “ Squire’ll deal with you, but not for a good two hours or more. So you can just think it all over in the dark.”

Slamming the door Tim locked us in, and stumped away. His assertion that Mr. Chelton would not deal with us, till he had dined, gave me instant concern for my mother’s anxiety at my failure to return for supper. I pictured her dolefully—with my meal set all ready for me ; sitting listening for my steps, peering up at the clock, and running out to the gate and waiting there, but seeing still no sign of me. And

dreading, I guessed well, lest I should have disappeared as from the face of the earth—vanished with never a word to her, even as my father—of whom I shall tell presently. I cursed Tim Kerrick, Squire Chelton, and Mr. Bradbury.

“What’s going to happen to us now, John?” Tony muttered through the dark. “What’ll the Squire do with us, do you think?”

“Oh, he’ll laugh, for he’s sure to be half drunk when he sees us. Tell us we’ll be hanged, if we’re not shot for poachers first. And if Tim Kerrick makes the case black enough, Squire’ll give him leave to baste us.”

“Yes, but Tim would have basted us properly, and let us go,” said Tony. “Why should that old black crow want to spoil Tim’s sport and bid him bring us here, unless he’s a notion of having us clapped in gaol? But for him we’d have been through Tim’s hands by now, and been limpin’ home. Do you know him, John?”

“Oh, I only know he’s Squire’s lawyer. You heard Tim say so, if you didn’t know before. I’d never heard of him or clapped eyes on him.”

“He seemed to know you.”

“Yes, he did. But I don’t know how. We’ll hear, when Squire’s dined. Pray God, he doesn’t spare the bottle! Sit ye down, Tony, while you’re able.”

And in the dark we sat down on the cold, flagged floor. I tell you the harness-room was like a vault for gloom and chill. The time we were held there seemed unending ; only Tim came near us, and then merely to be assured that we were safe, and to growl vengefully at us, as he flashed his lantern down on us. We wearied soon of conjecturing what should happen to us. We sat huddled together silently, and while Tony sought to pull the rabbit from his pocket, and at last succeeded to sling it from him with a curse, I set myself to pondering over Mr. Bradbury's mysterious interest in me, and to striving to recollect when, if ever, I had set eyes on the gentleman before. Never, so far as my memory served me, though my mother and I had lived ten years at Chelton.

To my seventh year we had lived with my father in London. I remembered my father clearly,—tall and darkly handsome, his black hair silver-threaded, though at the time of his mysterious disappearance he was not more than thirty-seven years of age. I remembered the moods of brooding melancholy darkening the natural liveliness of his disposition ; his strength, his tenderness with my mother and myself. I remembered, as the most sorrowful time of my childhood, the day of his disappearance,—my

mother waiting the hours through from eve till dawn, hoping against hope for the sound of his return,—the days succeeding of alternate hopes never fulfilled and terrors not allayed.

My father had held a poor clerkship with the East India Company. He had left the House late in the day to carry a letter down to the docks for the master of an Indiaman ; but had never delivered the letter, and had vanished without trace or word. I remembered my mother's pitiful distress, as day succeeded day without tidings, and the cloud of mystery was in no way lifted. A countrywoman and friendless, she could make little search for him ; it was assumed by the gentlemen of the East India House, that he had been pressed aboard one of the King's ships ; even so, none of his name was ever found among the crews, though the interest of the Company secured inquiry from the Commissioners of His Majesty's Navy.

And my mother, distraught for many days, seemed stricken with terror of the Town and its associations, and took coach and fled away with me to Chelton ; all the years since we had had no word of my father and did not know whether he was alive or dead. We had lived quietly in a little cottage on the edge of Chelton—the last dwelling, indeed, of the village ere the street

passed into the great highway. My mother was possessed of small means—a legacy, I believed, from a kinsman, though she would tell me nothing either of my father's family or of her own. She had not sufficient for our needs ; she added to our means by fine needlework for the Squire's lady and her folk ; how she found the five guineas a year for which the Rev. Mr. Vining allowed me to share the studies and the discipline of his son Tony I did not know. Yet, though I, lazy and graceless young dog as I was, urged her to let me seek employment in Chelton or in London itself, she would not hear of this. She declared, dear soul, that she would have me first a scholar ; even though I had turned seventeen, there was time and to spare for me to choose a calling. So with Tony I had become an equally indifferent scholar, in spite of Mr. Vining's cane, and as abandoned a rogue and poacher. So I sat now with the parson's son awaiting Squire Chelton's summary justice, and most like Tim Kerrick's execution of it. But Mr. Bradbury— ?

Mr. Bradbury sat in a cushioned chair by the fire ; Mr. Chelton supported his huge body more or less steadily against the chimney-piece, when at last Tim Kerrick paraded us before them in the library. It was a vast room,—its shelves lined with books, none of which, I fear, Mr. Chelton

had ever opened from the day when his father's death put him into possession of the Hall and its acres. Old Mr. Gilbert Chelton's portrait looked coldly down from its gilded frame above the chimney-piece on his stout son, flushed from his drink—his red coat, buckskins and high boots all mud-splashed from the cross-country ride of the day. Squire Chelton had not changed his rig to do honour to his guests, who, I took it from the roars of laughter yet sounding in the dining-room, were gentlemen of tastes similar to his own. His iron-grey hair was wind-blown; his blood-shot eyes were as unsteady as his legs. He exuded good humour—natural to him, but stimulated by as liberal an indulgence in the contents of his cellar as he expected from any gentleman of his company. While Mr. Gilbert's portrait looked its disapproval, the paintings of four other dead and gone Cheltons of a marked resemblance to the Squire seemed to regard him enviously from their old frames.

Mr. Bradbury, if he had not been permitted to spare the bottle at dinner, made no show of it in his complexion. He sat by the fire, his legs crossed; he had a silver snuff-box set with some glittering gem in his left hand; his face was almost as white as his linen. Observing him, I had a sense that the mind at the back of his broad

brow was as keen and as sparkling as the jewels on his fingers. With his leanness, his bloodlessness, his coldly impassive face, his cunning eyes peering through his spectacles, he was as odd a contrast to his stout, drink-flushed patron in his riding-rig as were his air of precision and the trimness of his dress to the frank disorder of the rich furniture in the room. Squire Chelton's desk was littered with papers and parchments ; an ink-horn was upset among them ; goose quills had blown to the carpet ; hats, cloaks, riding-whips, and gloves were tossed pell-mell on chairs and table. On this dark oaken table a half-emptied flagon of crystal and silver was set, and a circle of glasses stained with the red dregs of wine. The library was lit by many tall candles in silver sticks, and by the leaping flames from the hearth before which Mr. Bradbury warmed himself, with the reflections flashing from his jewelled hands, his snuff-box and the silver buckles of his shoes. I noted the keenness of Mr. Bradbury's gaze immediately Tim thrust us forward ; all the while I remained in the room, I fancied that his eyes never left me.

"Here's the young varmint, sir and Mr. Bradbury," Tim announced, touching his forelock.

"Young Vining and young Howe,—hey ?"

cried Mr. Chelton, essaying to frown majestically. "Caught poaching! Ye're a credit to the parson who has the schooling of the pair of ye. What have ye to say for yourselves? Come!"

We stared up at Mr. Chelton; grinned foolishly, but said nothing.

"Answer the Squire, varmint! Answer the Squire!" Tim muttered hoarsely at our backs.

"Tell the story for them, Kerrick," said Mr. Chelton. "Maybe when they hear your account they'll be ready enough to answer for themselves and call you a liar"—chuckling.

Tim, stepping forward, briskly told his tale—no, he told the tale of poachings from Chelton for the twelvemonth past,—not limiting himself to the matter of the evening, the rabbit in Tony's jacket or the conjectured content of my bag. Not a pheasant, not a hare, not a rabbit had been poached from Chelton, but had gone—on Tim's assertion—in company with Tony and me,—the worst pair of varmints, Tim dubbed us, as never was. Meanwhile, Squire Chelton from ruddy grew purple, from good-humoured choleric and from choleric nigh choking with passion. From time to time, as Tim proceeded, Mr. Chelton would burst out, "D'ye hear this, Bradbury?" or "D'ye hear that?" Mr. Bradbury nodded; said nothing, and took snuff, while he peered at

me through his spectacles. Tim wound up with a narration of the affair of the evening,—glowering at him I rejoiced to see the damage wrought by the bramble to his nose and chin.

“Now, you rogues,—now!” Mr. Chelton stormed. “What have ye to say to me? D’ye know this is a matter for Assizes? D’ye know that ye may be hanged for this? D’ye know that at the least ye’ll be shipped overseas? What d’ye think of it, Bradbury?”

“I think, my dear sir,” said Mr. Bradbury, smoothly, “that Kerrick overstates his case. Indeed, so much he overstates it, that did I instruct counsel for the defence of these lads, I promise that it would end with the committal of Kerrick here on a charge of perjury”—Mr. Bradbury laughed shrilly to himself, and took more snuff.

Tim stared at him with his eyes goggling, his jaw dropping. Mr. Chelton growling thunderously, “Upon my soul, Bradbury! Upon my soul——!” lurched to the table, and poured himself a glass of wine. Tony and I rejoicing fixed our eyes on Mr. Bradbury.

“Mr. Chelton,” Mr. Bradbury proceeded, “there’s no more in this matter than the roguery of these lads to-night,—a rabbit or so snared; these lads are poachers, and, no doubt, have

taken a pretty picking off Chelton. But Kerrick here would lay to their account the poachings of the countryside,—of gipsies, vagrants, village folk and odd. Without a tittle of proof, Mr. Chelton, without a tittle of proof that would hold good in a court of law.”

“Askin’ your pardon, Mr. Bradbury, sir,” Tim protested, “Parson’s son had a rabbit in his pocket, when we caught ’em, and young John Howe was carryin’ summat in his bag. He dropped it over in the furze.”

“Maybe,” said Mr. Bradbury, testily. “We’ll admit these facts, Tim Kerrick, we’ll admit them; but to seek, as you’ve done, my man, to prove against these lads the losses of a year past—losses which you’ve failed to prevent,—why, it’s preposterous, Kerrick,—it’s rank perjury!”

“Have you turned advocate for rogues and vagabonds, Bradbury?” asked Mr. Chelton, solemnly, though his eyes were twinkling once more, as much from the glass of wine, no doubt, as from Tim Kerrick’s indignation and discomfiture.

“Nay, Mr. Chelton,” cried Mr. Bradbury, “only consider the facts! The parson’s son and, doubtless, excellently schooled by his father.”

“Vining’s a worthy fellow,” Mr. Chelton

admitted, grinning. "I could tell you a rare story, Bradbury——" but broke off, as recollecting Tony's presence, yet continuing to chuckle to himself. Mr. Vining, though devout, was a fox-hunting parson after the Squire's own heart.

"Ay, and the lad Howe?" Mr. Bradbury asked, observing me steadily.

"A young varmint!" Tim asserted, vengefully.

"His folk, Mr. Chelton?"

"Mother's a widow woman—a decent body," Mr. Chelton answered readily. "Never a day behind with her rent. The lad was well enough till he turned poacher with young Vining there."

"Village folk? Chelton folk?"

"The mother and the lad have lived here these ten years. From London, I've heard say, Bradbury."

Mr. Bradbury took snuff. "Now, Mr. Chelton," he said, laughing, "these lads have done no more than a taste of Tim's ash-plant should have corrected in them. And would have corrected, but that I ordered them to be brought to the Hall,—I'll have a word with you, sir, presently, on my reason. But for two hours or so they've been in Tim's hands; they've been locked up in the dark, maybe, and they've been haled before you. The lesson should serve 'em, sir."

“Ain’t I to baste ’em properly, Squire?” asked Tim, aghast. “They’re varmint—varmint, sir!”

“No doubt,” said Mr. Bradbury. “But they’ll need no further lesson. Admonish them as you will, Mr. Chelton, and send them packing home to make their peace with their folk as they may. It’ll meet the purpose, I promise you. You’ll not be troubled with them again,” and standing up, he laughed shrilly and snapped his snuff-box lid. I realised that Mr. Bradbury’s purpose—to satisfy some passing curiosity—had been fulfilled. He stood peering at me still, his eyes darting like the jewels upon his fingers. “You’re long away from your guests, Mr. Chelton,” he said, with a wave of his hand toward the door.

The Squire hesitated a moment; then, with sudden roaring laughter, cried to us, “Oh, get away home, you dogs! Don’t let me have you here again. Out of this!—No, you don’t, Kerrick! You’ll remain here,” as Tim started for the door, purposing, I assumed, still to exercise justice upon us.

We did not stay to thank the Squire or Mr. Bradbury, but slinking out of the room, scurried through the hall, and presently were racing down the drive apace, lest Kerrick with his ash-plant pursue and overtake us.

MY mother was looking out from the gate into the moonlit street when I reached home. I saw her white cap poking from among the ever-greens, as I rounded the corner. She was white and shaking when she hurried to meet me.

“My dear, where have you been?” she cried. “I’ve been waiting for you these three hours or more. I’ve been so much afraid.”

“I’m sorry, mother,” I answered, as I kissed her. “I’ve been with Tony. Nothing’s amiss. I went with him up to the Hall, and saw the Squire, that’s all.”

“You’ve been in trouble, then? Oh, you’ve been caught poaching with young Vining! That’s what you mean, isn’t it?” she said, indignantly.

“Yes, that’s it, mother, but Squire only laughed.”

She said no more, but stepped before me through the garden—now all silvered with the moon and scented with gillie-flowers and stocks and sweet moss-roses—into the cottage. She

kept our dwelling as neat and trim within as the garden about it. The room we entered was freshly lime-washed; the windows were hung with snow-white curtains and gay with flowers in boxes. Settle and chairs and table were oaken, and dark with age; an old Dutch clock, brass candlesticks and canisters stood on the chimney-piece; blue and white ware and lustre were ranged upon the shelves, with pewter polished silver-white even as the brasses shone like gold. My supper was set on bleached white linen—a cold pasty, bread and cheese, and cider in a covered jug; though I was well-nigh starving for the lateness of the hour, and though my mother hastened to cut a wedge from the pasty for me, I could not eat or drink till I had told the tale of our adventure and of Mr. Bradbury's interest. At the first mention of Mr. Bradbury's name, I believed that she started, and that the colour crept into her cheeks. My mother was pale and tall and fine,—all white and black, ivory-white of skin, dark of eye and hair—wearing black stuff gowns, snow-white mob-caps and aprons, save of a Sunday, when she put on her silk dress, in which she made a figure fitter to the Hall than to the village,—so it seemed to me.

Observing her stirred from her placidity, I asked, "Who's Mr. Bradbury, mother?"

Squire's lawyer, I know, but what can be his interest in us? Why didn't he let Tim baste Tony and me? And why did he question the Squire about you and me, and how long we'd lived in the village? And then the way he watched me!"

She said quietly, though there was a tremor in her voice, "Sit down and eat your supper, John. It's late and I'm weary. Mr. Bradbury is the servant of many great families. Once—years ago—he knew me, before I was wed to Richard Howe. And—and—he knew your father. You're very like your father." Watching her, I believed that I saw dread in her eyes, and that her lips were trembling. Meeting my look, she added steadily, "That is all, John. Promise me that you'll not go poaching with Tony again!"

"Oh, it's easy enough to promise, mother," I said, sitting down to my supper, "but it's not so easy to keep my word."

"Why? It should be easy!"

"Yes, and it would be, if I had anything else to occupy me. You see, I'm weary of wasting my days in Chelton. You'd have me a scholar; and that I'll never be. Mr. Vining would tell you so, for I'm sure he tells me as much every day of the week. And what should Tony and I be doing except getting into mischief?"

"I've asked you, John," she said, simply, "to wait just a little longer. I couldn't have you go to London. Remembering your father! You're safe here. I wish you could be happy."

"But here I am turned seventeen. I've not the head for book-learning. And what's the purpose of it all? Do you want me to be a schoolmaster or a clergyman?"

"No," she said quickly, "to be a gentleman. This Mr. Bradbury—did he say anything else to you? Anything about your father?"

"Only what I've told you."

She nodded, but said no more; sitting silent and abstracted until I had eaten my supper; rising then to clear away the meal, whilst I, taking down my Latin grammar, set myself to conning my lesson for the morrow, apprehending that Mr. Vining's cane would make amends for the punishment of which Mr. Bradbury's intervention had disappointed Tim Kerrick. But if my eyes were fixed on the page, my thoughts were straying back to Mr. Bradbury, from his appearance out of his wrecked coach to the moment when I had left him standing chuckling beside Squire Chelton. My mother, coming back quietly, sat down with her sewing; so we remained till the hands of the clock pointed to the hour of eleven. And even as I shut my Latin

grammar to prepare for bed, and my mother rose to set away her sewing, a tapping sounded on the door.

My mother started ; whispered to me, “ Who should come so late ? ”—and, going to the door, demanded, “ Who is there ? ”

A low voice answered, “ Mr. Bradbury, seeking Mrs. Mary Howe.”

I heard my mother gasp, and saw her throw her hands up ; controlling herself then she unbarred the door, and curtsied, as Mr. Bradbury, wrapped in his black cloak, entered the room.

“ Forgive me, Mrs. Howe,” he said, with his stiff bow. “ I’d not have come so late, but that I desired my business with you and your son to be kept secret, and that it brooked of no delay.”

Whilst I stood gaping at Mr. Bradbury, my mother barred the door, and dusting a chair, then set it by the table for him. When he sat down, she remained standing facing him ; though her eyes seemed to regard him with terror, and her breath came swiftly, she uttered not a word, or asked the purpose of his visit. He looked at her, and smiled to himself ; sought his jewelled box in his pocket, and took snuff deliberately. He said at last, “ I was not mistaken, Mrs. Howe. The boy’s looks and likeness did not mislead me.

Need I express myself as very happy to renew our acquaintance ? ”

My mother, leaning forward, said slowly, “ Since my son told me, sir, of your interest, I did not doubt that you would come here. Let me say only this : that had I dreamt that you would ever come to Chelton, and recognise him so easily, I’d not have stayed in the village. I’d have sought another hiding-place.”

“ Mrs. Howe,” he said, smiling, “ you’re frank with me. I’m happy that you should be. You will be frank with me in answering all I have to ask you.” She watched him silently ; he waved his hand towards me, asking, “ Isn’t it time for the lad to be abed ? ”

“ He stays here, Mr. Bradbury,” she answered with composure. “ What you may have to say need be no secret from him.”

He nodded, his look expressing satisfaction, but his keen eyes darting at her, as though to read her thought ; she continued steadily to watch him. He said, “ Your answer gives me confidence, Mrs. Howe. I’m happy that you’re willing that the boy remain.”

“ Mr. Bradbury,” cried she, with mounting colour, “ pray ask your questions ! ”

“ First let me put this to you—the boy’s father—— ? ”

“ I think him dead. He passed by the name of Richard Howe in London. When he left me I believed at first that he must have returned to his home. He has gone out of my life. I—I cannot think him living ”—with a sudden gasp and start of tears. “ Mr. Bradbury, you do not come from him ? ”

“ Alas no ! ”

“ From whom, then ? From them ? ”

He did not answer, saying, as if he had not heard her question, “ To anyone knowing my honoured client, old Mr. Edward Craike, this young gentleman would pass unquestionably as his grandson.—His look would establish his identity as Richard’s son. If—forgive me—proof of your marriage were available ? You use—your maiden name ! ”

I felt my cheeks burn, and started forward ; he waved me impatiently aside ; my mother interrupted hastily, her face expressionless, but the colour staining her face, “ You need not ask your question, Mr. Bradbury.”

He proceeded coolly, “ Mr. Richard Craike has been lost to his family for many years. Having known Richard I appreciate easily the reasons which actuated him in cutting himself wholly from his family and in passing under an assumed name. Richard’s death—again forgive me,

madam,—should render his son heir to Mr. Edward Craike,—a gentleman of considerable fortune,—as I need not remind you.” He smeared his lip with snuff, and paused, eyeing her closely. She answering nothing, he said swiftly, “You do not help me, Mrs. Craike.”

“Pray, sir, go on,” she said, impatiently. “Say what you have to say.”

He said, still in that hard tone of his, “From one who had suffered at the hands of the Craike family—more particularly at the hands of Mr. Charles Craike, and at the hands of Mrs. Charles,—since deceased,—of Mr. Charles, then, heir in the event of Richard’s death,—it might be idle for me to seek any assistance only to serve the interests of my client—Mr. Edward—as I conceive these interests. Idle to plead the loneliness of an old, unhappy man, having lost the one thing that made life precious to him—his elder son, the very light of his eyes. But if I urge, Mrs. Craike, that the opportunity presents itself,—not only of insuring the fortunes of Richard’s son—but also of retaliating upon Charles Craike, of excluding him, his son, Oliver, from a rich inheritance,—what then, Mrs. Craike ? ”

She looked up at him, her eyes curiously alight, her lips curling, but for the moment did not answer.

“And Charles Craike being responsible—possibly responsible—for the disappearance of his brother”—he proceeded, tapping impatiently upon his snuff-box, “what then, Mrs. Craike?”

“Mr. Bradbury,” she said instantly, “this is a question I shall not answer now.”

“Mr. Edward Craike is of advanced years and broken health. His death is shortly to be expected,” he said. “Your decision is of some urgency. Nor do I desire my visits to you to be a matter of gossip at Chelton.”

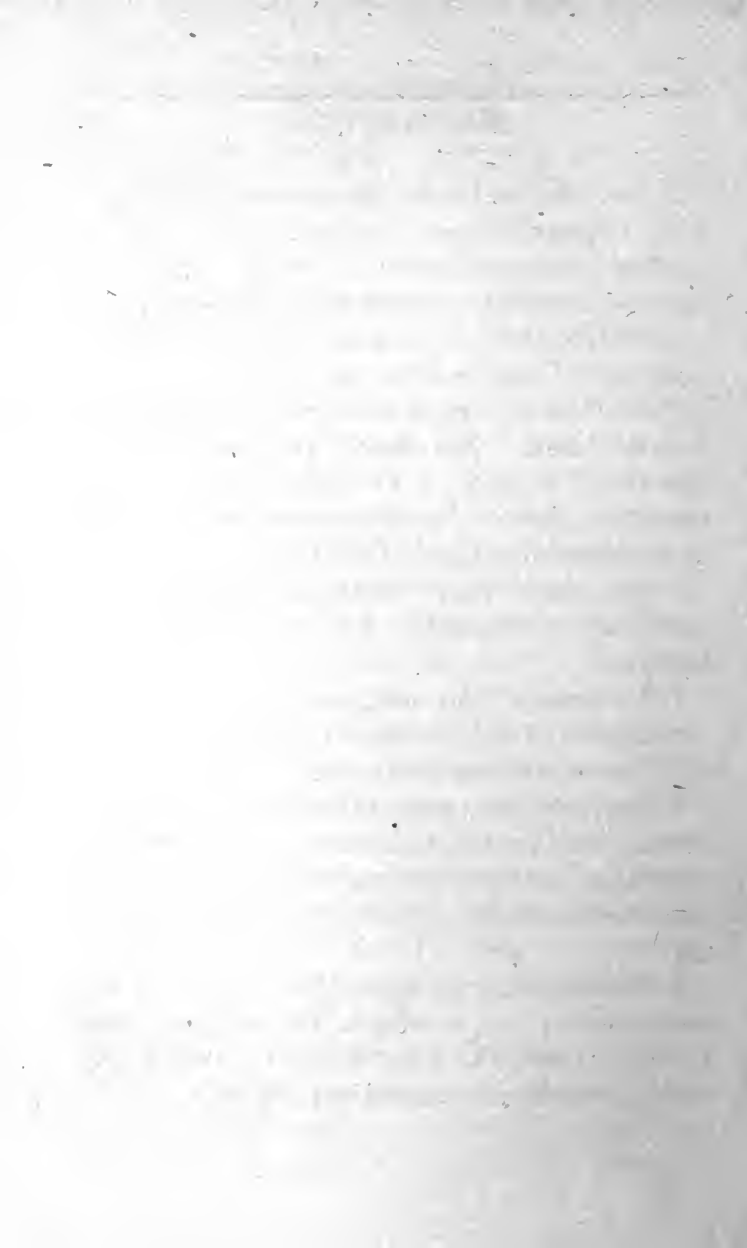
“You may come to-morrow night,” she answered indifferently, “as you have come to-night.”

“Ay, surely,” he said, rising stiffly, “but you should be able to answer me immediately.”

“I have said to-morrow night.”

“You, madam, guaranteeing that you will remain here in the meantime on my assurance that I do not seek to promote the interests of Mr. Charles Craike. You will not seek to elude me?”

“You have my promise, Mr. Bradbury,” she said quietly; and moving to the door, unbarred it. She curtsied to his stiff bow; wrapping his cloak about him he passed out swiftly.



WHEN Mr. Bradbury returned to the cottage on the following evening, my mother would not allow me to remain in the room to hear what passed. She would have had me go to bed immediately on Mr. Bradbury's knocking at the door ; recollecting then, that from my room I must inevitably hear all that passed, she bade me wait in the garden, until her conversation with him was ended.

She had refused in the interval between his visits to answer any of my eager questions ; she offered me no information. To be sure, my head was full of notions ; this much I knew : that my grandfather was wealthy ; that my father and mother had assumed her name—for what reason I could not conjecture,—and that Mr. Bradbury, if he had his will, would surely make me known as the only son of Richard Craike, and, may be, heir to old Edward. Ay, and that Charles, my father's brother, was an enemy of my mother ; that he and his wife had wronged her cruelly in the past ; that she hated him, and that the

prospect of revenge on him inclined her to accede to Mr. Bradbury's wish.

Through the day my mother went about her household duties calmly, as was her wont. She insisted that I should go to my studies with Mr. Vining and Tony as on any day ; only stressing that I should say nothing to my friend concerning Mr. Bradbury. But, I promise you, I had no mind that day for Latin grammar, or for the *Letters of Cicero* ; the event was inevitable,—Mr. Vining caning me soundly, with a display of wrath ill-fitting a clergyman, even as, I took it from Tony's uneasiness and writhing on his chair, he had chastised his son for his late return the night before. I was all eagerness for the night and the coming of Mr. Bradbury.

He came stealthily—wrapped in his black cloak. As he entered, my mother bade me leave the room and wait in the garden. I waited all impatiently. I could scarcely refrain from sneaking up under the window, and listening to their conversation. An hour or more their voices sounded from within ; at no time did my mother raise her tone ; often I heard Mr. Bradbury dictatorial, occasionally persuasive ; I believed at last from his laughter that he had prevailed. I lounged drearily about the garden, until I heard the door opening, and saw Mr. Bradbury coming

out, his cloak about him and his hat bent down over his brows.

As I stepped forward to open the gate for him, he paused in his path, and eyed me smiling.

"So, Mr. John Craike," he greeted me. "So!"

"Mr. John Craike!" I repeated.

"From now on, Mr. John Craike. Or from the moment of your departure from the village, Mr. John Craike. Can you forget, sir, that you were ever John Howe?"

"I don't understand, sir?"

"Necessarily, no, Mr. Craike. But I am to have your company to London a week from now. You, sir, are to honour my house, until I have communicated with my client, Mr. Edward Craike; then I trust to have the pleasure of presenting you to your grandfather."

"What has happened, Mr. Bradbury?" I asked eagerly. "What has my mother told you?"

"Nay, there, Mr. Craike, I must be silent. I must leave it to your good mother to satisfy your curiosity, if she will, sir; if she will. Till this day week, sir"—and with a polite bow he slipped past me, and was gone.

I hurried into the cottage. My mother sat by the table, her hands clasped; so rapt was she that she did not hear me when I came in; she

did not heed me till I caught her arm, crying, "What has happened, mother? Tell me!"

She said then, "What has happened! What I have prayed would never come to pass!"

"Dear, what is the matter?"

"That for all my prayers," she went on, as if speaking to herself; "that for all my hope to keep my son from that doomed house,—this yet should be! Dear God, if it be Thy purpose that out of evil shall at last come good——" but broke off and looked wildly at me.

I held her hands, and, wondering, asked, "Who are the Craikes, then? What is the doomed house? Why have we passed for all these years as Howe, and lived as village folk at Chelton, if our name be Craike? Hiding from them—my father's kinsfolk?"

"Yes, yes, hiding from them, and from their wealth—their ill-gotten wealth."

"Ill-gotten,—how?"

"You'll know—oh, soon enough, you'll know."

"Mr. Bradbury said a week to-day I go away with him. And you—what of you, mother?"

"I stay here!"

"You stay here alone, and I go to London and on to my grandfather's house? Not I!"

"Yes, you go! You go to your grandfather—to be rich—his heir. You go to bring to nothing

all your uncle's years of plotting, all the hurt that he has ever done to mine and me. Surely you go ! But never shall I set foot in that accursed house."

"And yet you'd have me go."

She answered, "I'd have you go to your own. I'd have you go,—thinking I've made you man—not as old Edward Craike or his son Charles. Your father's son."

"My father, you have heard of him ? He is alive ?"

"I have heard nothing—nothing. I think him dead. He does not come to me in dreams as living. Charles Craike would have him dead ; and he is surely dead. And oh, at last to have my reckoning with Charles Craike—to have my reckoning, as surely I shall have !"

"Tell me more ! I do not understand. Why do you hate the Craikes so much ? What wrong have they done you ? Tell me all !"

She rose up from her chair and drew her hands from mine. "Your father, whom we loved so much," she said, "was taken from us. Whether he was done to death, or carried out of England by the plotting of Charles Craike, I do not know. I think his brother guilty, knowing his hate for him and me. Charles Craike has thought to profit by your father's death. I'd have you go

with Mr. Bradbury to your grandfather. I am assured by Mr. Bradbury that you shall go in safety and return in safety. I fear Charles Craike—I fear for you, as I have feared these years that we have hidden here. I fear the fortune of old Edward Craike, piled up by sin and cruel wrong to others, will bring no good or happiness to you or any of his house. I fear—and yet because I hate Charles Craike, and I would punish him, and bring his sins to nothing, I'd have you go. Believing that you will avenge your father, and come again to me ; believing Heaven wills it so ! ”

BY break of day a week thence I waited by the highway for the coach and pair which should carry me with Mr. Bradbury up to London. My mind was yet confused for the swiftness of events. My mother, after her first outburst on the evening of Mr. Bradbury's second visit, had become secretive ; she whose life had seemed to me so open and simple, had grown inscrutable ; she would satisfy me fully on none of the matters of most concern to me. This much I gathered—that I was John Craike, son of Richard Craike, who had passed by the name of Howe ; that my grandfather was possessed of considerable means, and that for greed of this Charles Craike, my uncle, had plotted against his brother, bringing about his disappearance from England, if not his death. I believed that my mother at the time of her marriage had held some menial position in the service of Mrs. Charles Craike ; that the match had excited bitter opposition from the Craike family, and that my father and she had been wedded secretly, and had lived under her

name in London, fearing Charles Craike and his hostility. And that she had found from the first the hand of Charles Craike in the disappearance of her husband, and had fled away to live at Chelton through her concern for me and the enmity of Charles.

But of my grandfather's fortune—"ill-gotten," she named it,—and of "the doomed house," she would say no more; her secrecy hung like a shadow over us for that last week of mine at Chelton. She went quietly about her preparations for my journey, refusing to listen to my appeals that I should stay with her; insisting that, if I loved her, I should give myself wholly into Mr. Bradbury's hands. "For," she said, "I believe in him—nay, I know him for a friend of yours and mine. And he has great influence with your grandfather, and will insure your safe return to me." Only from all the week of wondering and doubts unanswered I realised the bitterness of her spirit toward Charles Craike, and the keenness of her desire that I, as only son of the elder son, should come between him and the inheritance for which he had planned; this hate of him and this desire for his punishment outweighed even her fears for me. Though Mr. Bradbury had convinced her that he would insure for me a safe journey and a safe return.

But at the time of parting,—ere the dawn was come,—her hardness passed from her. I saw, as I had never seen, since the day of my father's disappearance, tears falling from her eyes. She clasped me to her, as if she would never loose me from her arms. Not my first separation from her—I believed then it would be brief, and that, when Mr. Bradbury had made me known to my grandfather, I would return to her; and all would be as before,—alone affected her. I understood now, indeed, she feared for me, and that her terrors surging up almost induced her thus late to break her word to Mr. Bradbury. Looking back, ere I passed out of sight from the cottage, I saw her standing as a grey shadow in the doorway; I waved my hat back to her; and so I left her.

And then the spirit of adventure and new experience took me, and I swung out on to the highway. I had put on my best black clothes, and the fine frilled shirt my mother had stitched and starched for me. I carried only a little knapsack containing such few articles as I should need on my journey up to London with Mr. Bradbury; there, my mother had told me, I would be fitted out with garments more suitable to my condition than she could fashion for me. At the first milestone from the village I stood to wait by

the highway for the coming of Mr. Bradbury in his coach ; it was his wish and my mother's that my departure with him should not become a matter of village gossip. I had parted regretfully from my friend Tony ; giving him only to understand that I journeyed up to London with Mr. Bradbury to be made known to my father's folk, assuring him that I would soon return, and binding him to secrecy.

The morn came chill and grey. A drear wind was abroad ; the pale dust whirled down the highway. I waited in the cold for a good half-hour—the sun was up, and the countryside leaping in its light from blackness and greyness into the rich green of spring—ere the coach and pair bearing Mr. Bradbury approached, driven rapidly from Chelton. As the driver pulled up for me, Mr. Bradbury's gloved hand let down the glass ; nodding his head to me in welcome, he hastened to admit me into the coach. It had been repaired from the damages of its overthrow ; it was cushioned luxuriously ; my body sank into its warm depth, and Mr. Bradbury, with all politeness, hastened to wrap a robe of furs about me for the chill of the morning. He embarrassed me by his close scrutiny ; I assumed that he regarded superciliously my rustic appearance in the best clothes I had ; realising my confusion,

he said, laughing, "Forgive me, Mr. Craike, I marvel only that a lady of your mother's intelligence should ever have thought to keep your kinship to the Craikes a secret."

"She has left me, sir, very much in the dark," I told him. "A week since I was John Howe. To-day I am John Craike and ride with you. I do not understand your interest in me."

"Mr. Craike," he said, leaning towards me, "if you have your father's look, you have a little of your mother's, too. I esteem highly her prudence and intelligence. And, sir, your likeness to your mother encourages me to be frank and open with you, realising that, whatever passes between us is said in confidence,—I, acting in your interest, and in the interest of Mr. Edward Craike, whose adviser I have the honour to be."

"To be sure, sir, I ask for frankness, and pledge my word of honour to you."

He said earnestly, "Mr. Craike, in serving your interest I believe that I shall best serve the interest of my client. I purpose, to be sure, to take you to London and prepare you for presentation to your grandfather. I purpose to accompany you to his house. You are by no means assured of a welcome from him ; you are assured only of the hostility of your Uncle

Charles,—your mother's enemy—and mine !
Ay,—and mine ! I have a purpose in promoting
your interests. I have the purpose of keeping
from the inheritance of a great estate—Charles
Craike ! ”

“ A great estate ! ”

“ No great acreage, but wealth such as few
commoners in England own. I would keep this
from the hands of Charles Craike, knowing that
if it pass to him, it becomes a force for evil, surely
it becomes.”

“ Why ? ”

He answered swiftly, “ A week or more from
now, Mr. Craike, you'll know Charles Craike.
Judge for yourself.”

“ But from where did my grandfather derive
his fortunes ? ” I asked, remembering my
mother's words after Mr. Bradbury had left her
that night at the cottage. “ By trade, or as an
inheritance ? ”

I believed that his eyes flickered and that he
hesitated. He answered glibly, “ The fruits,
Mr. Craike, of his own industry.”

I stared at him and muttered, “ What should
my mother mean, Mr. Bradbury, by the words
'that doomed house' and 'the wealth ill-
gotten' ? ”

He said swiftly, “ Doomed, if the inheritance

go to Charles Craike! Surely doomed! Ill-gotten! Gotten as honestly as most!"

"Mr. Bradbury, forgive me,—are you frank with me?"

He took snuff ere he replied. "Mr. John Craike, at your grandfather's house you'll learn the answers to your questions. Will you forgive me if now I do not answer you?"

"Well, then, concerning this house—its whereabouts? I know nothing."

He laughed a little. "Craike House," he said, "passes among the folk of the neighbourhood—it is far from here—by an odd name. 'Rogues' Haven,' sir. 'Rogues' Haven.'"

"From the reputation of my kinsfolk?"

"Surely not," he answered, "but from the retired nature of your grandfather's life, and from the practice of the vulgar to ascribe mystery and evil where their curiosity is not satisfied. And from the charity of your grandfather in keeping about him his old servants and dependants. An odd company, maybe, Mr. John—a very odd company. But judge of the house and its inmates yourself, sir. I warn you only—I am bound to warn you—against Mr. Charles Craike."



THREE weeks thence I accompanied Mr. Bradbury on the journey down from London to my grandfather's house. Mr. Bradbury had sent off a letter to Mr. Craike announcing that he purposed to visit him, and to present his grandson to him. He had received only a few lines of a letter in reply, penned, he believed, not by the old man but by his son Charles,—to the effect that Mr. Bradbury's information astounded Mr. Edward Craike, but that he consented to receive Mr. Bradbury and the young gentleman when it should be convenient for them to journey down to Craike. Mr. Bradbury seemed ill-pleased with the nature of the letter; he took pains to impress on me the desirability of my commending myself to my grandfather's favour and affection.

From Mr. Bradbury's first admission to me, on our journey up to London, that he had no liking for Charles Craike, and that his purpose was to prevent his inheriting his father's fortune, he had stressed repeatedly my uncle's certain chagrin at

my appearance in Craike House and his inevitable hostility to me. Already, indeed, I hated my Uncle Charles, and was ardent to avenge on him my parents' sufferings at his hands ; else, I had only a natural curiosity in these kinsfolk of mine, and a lively interest in the prospect of adventure. "Rogues' Haven"—so the country folk named Craike House ; Mr. Bradbury would tell me only that the name resulted from rustic curiosity and from the eccentricities of my grandfather's servants ; the gentleman's very reticence concerning my kinsmen, the stock from which they were sprung, and the sources of their wealth, intrigued me the more.

Mr. Bradbury had treated me handsomely at his fine house in London ; a country lad, I had enjoyed the wonders and diversions of the Town. He had put me into the hands of his tailor ; so that now I was dressed, if not as fastidiously, at least with a fashion equal to his own. I had not ceased to admire my blue cloth coat, silver-buttoned and braided, or my white breeches, or to appreciate the ease of silken stockings on my legs and fine linen on my body. Now wrapped warmly in greatcoat and shawls I sat with Mr. Bradbury in his coach, driven through the night towards Craike House. We should have arrived at our destination on the second afternoon

of our journey, but delayed by a cast shoe, here were we now seated still in the coach, stiff and weary ; I felt my stomach sinking from the lack of a meal ; and the dark was come. Ay, the night was come with a rough gale from the sea ; the mud from the wet roads obscured the glass ; this mattered nothing, for the night was inky black with clouds wind-driven. We were out, Mr. Bradbury told me, on a wild and lonely stretch of road, and not more than nine miles from our destination. But when the lash of rain washed clear the carriage-glass, and the light of the lamps flashed on his face, I saw him anxious and his eyes alert ; I understood his concern, which I had remarked throughout our journey, over a little oaken box by his side. I had assumed that it contained documents ; now that it was open on his knees, I saw that it held a pair of pistols ; he was looking at the priming of them as the light allowed him. I cried out, to be heard above the roll of the wind and the rumble of the wheels, " What d'ye fear, sir ? Highwaymen ? "

He cried back, " A mere precaution, Mr. Craike. I'm always cautious on these roads,—lonely and dark, and no one within hail."

" Pray let me handle one," I called ; but he answered, smiling, " Nay, my dear sir, I'll not trust you with 'em, if you'll allow me. For you

might easily be pistoling one of your own folk, not knowing."

"Have no fear, sir, I've had the handling of a pistol ere this," I assured him. But, smiling that odd smile of his, he answered nothing.

Now it seemed that Mr. Bradbury's coachboy knew the road well—the gentleman having travelled over it often before; for, without direction from his master he drove on as steadily through the dark as the roughness of the way and the weariness of the horses would allow. Ay, and the wildness of the night—the great wind from the sea; we were travelling near to the coast; once when Mr. Bradbury let down the glass to peer out, the salt tang and the reek of mud flats was borne in on the chill air. I realised that Mr. Bradbury's apprehension grew with the darkness and the storm. When he drew up the glass and sat down, he did not lie back on his cushions or muffle his shawl about his ears; he leaned towards the window, staring forth into the dark, seeming, too, by his impatient wave of his hand when I would have spoken, to be listening intently. I strained my ears to hear, but for the time heard nothing save the rumble of wheels, and the rushing of the wind; afar a thunderous sound as the beating of the sea, no more, until the wind was cut from us in a dip of the road, as if we

drove among great trees, or between high hedgerows ; then it seemed I heard the pounding of hoofs upon the road, as if the riders were at no great distance in the rear. The sound was indistinguishable, when presently we swept out into the open country ; and the wind had its way with us once more. As we drove on apace, Mr. Bradbury remained intent by the window ; committing myself to Providence and Mr. Bradbury, I lay back on my cushions. Indeed, I attached little import to the sounds ; I was dull with weariness and hunger ; I had been travelling for nigh two days. I had spent the worst of bad nights through the suffocation of a deep feather bed at the inn in which we had lodged for the night. I tell you the desire for sleep prevailed over uneasiness at the loneliness of our way and sounds of riders through the night ; or my excitement at the thought of presentation to my kinsfolk. I lay back ; pulled my greatcoat about me, and slept. From time to time, the jolting of the coach, as the wheels dipped in the ruts or struck on stones, would rouse me ; always I saw dully that Mr. Bradbury sat stiffly by the window, and that his left hand strayed towards the case of pistols open on the seat beside him.

I was awakened by the crash and splintering of glass. As I started up, I was flung backwards by

the shock of plunging horses and reeling coach ; half-dazed, I believed that I heard hoarse voices above the roaring wind. I believed that the door of the coach was dragged open ; that Mr. Bradbury sought to hold it ; failing, swung round and gripped his pistols ; but at that instant the coach reeled, and he was flung out into the road ; I saw the flashes of his discharging pistols as he fell.

The coach came to a standstill. I remember crying out, and leaping to my feet, to spring down into the road to Mr. Bradbury. I remember then only a flash of light—no more.

I REMEMBER that once an itinerant showman, passing through Chelton, essayed *Mazeppa* ; none the less, the sorry performance took my fancy. Now, when I became conscious, I had a sense that I was borne forward so through the night bound upon a horse ; my next sensation, after the throbbing of my head, was the friction of the saddle beneath me. I realised at last that I was, indeed, held upon the horse ; not cords, but the strong arm of the rider held me before him in saddle ; he was riding with me at a great speed through the night. I must have cried out, for I recall his hoarse voice in my ear, " Keep your mouth shut, my lad, or 'twill be the worse for you ! "—and the grip of his arm tightened about me.

Now I was no light burden, and I was stoutly built for a stripling ; even so, he carried me easily, and when my head cleared and my strength came back, the grip of his arm held me securely. I must needs sit before him helpless, though the saddle galled me sorely ; my brows throbbed, and

my mind was dark with apprehensions. To be sure my coming to Rogues' Haven must have been dreaded by my uncle ; and to be sure this was some trick of his to prevent my presentation to my grandfather ; but what should be the end of this adventure, and to what fate would my enemies consign me ? I told myself that surely, if they had planned to make an end of me, they would have done so immediately on the taking of the coach, and not have borne me off in this mysterious manner through the night.

And what of Mr. Bradbury ? Had he died in his fall ? Had they done him further violence ? I had grown to have a high regard for the gentleman, yet I fear my immediate concern for his fate was chiefly that he should be alive to bring me speedy aid. Lying passive in the grip of that strong arm, I believed that one other horseman bore us company ; I could hear hoof-beats and the jingle of accoutrements ; once, as the moon flashed through the racing clouds, I caught a glimpse of a dark rider a little ahead. My captor pushed his horse forward at scarcely less speed, though the moon, ere the clouds hid it, revealed to me that we were riding over rough country. I saw the boughs of gnarled and twisted trees toss to the stormy heaven ; I saw a waste of rock and furze before me ; I believed that we were yet at

no great distance from the coast, for the salt was upon my lips, as though the gale sweeping up bore scud with it. Momentarily we paused upon an upland ; such was the force of the wind that it seemed the horse must be rolled over with us ; then, with the wind blowing at our backs, we struck away inland.

The blow had torn my scalp ; the blood was wet upon my brows ; my head was racked with the movement of the horse beneath us ; my body cruelly galled. All this was nothing to the ever-increasing terror of the thought—what would they do to me, now that they had me captive ? Once I cried out, “ What’s your purpose with me, in God’s name ? ” but the sole answer was the tightening of the grip upon me. Bending back my head, I tried to make out in the dark what manner of man was holding me ; save for the shoulders, the thick neck, and the great head, I could discern nothing ; I heard his jeering laughter above me. How long, how far we rode, I could not conjecture ; the time seemed endless for my pains and terrors. Ever the thought tormented me—what would they do with me ? Put me aboard some ship to carry me overseas ? No, for it seemed that they were bearing me away from the coast, and mounting slowly to wild and rugged country ; would they hold me prisoner

there, or murder me out of the ken of folk ? And, if Mr. Bradbury lived, how would he endure defeat by Charles Craike, through whose agency surely I came to be in this plight ?

We were riding at last over more level country from the increasing swiftness of our flight ; we slackened speed going among trees ; I heard the rushing of the wind through their complaining boughs. We mounted a low hill, and swiftly descended. Again the moon was clear ; I believed that we were going down into a cup in the moors ; that rocks and woods were all about us. And ahead at last I saw a light flicker like a will-o'-the-wisp,—a spark of light that increased to the square shining of a window—a greenish light ; the moon breaking again from the clouds I saw that we rode down to a house alone in this lonely hollow of the moors. We rode soon over level ground ; we reached a high stone wall ; the rider ahead of us had leaped down and was unlocking an iron gate ; we passed through, and the gate crashed to behind us. At a walk now we clattered over cobbles up to the front of the house ; I saw the green shining off the curtained window from the grey front of moonlit stone. It was a house of two stories in height, a drear grey house, grey-roofed and over-topped by chimney stacks ; looking up I believed that I saw

iron bars before the unshuttered windows. My captor roared out, "Hallo, there!" as we pulled up before the door; and gripping me by my collar lowered me to the ground, dropping down after me, and lugging me with him into the porch. The door opened with a clash and clatter like the iron-bound door of a prison. And blinking for the light from a lantern, I saw peering out a crone, bent nigh double, one skinny claw holding up the lantern, so that it shone upon her shrivelled livid face, her red-lidded, pale green eyes, on her grey hair wind-blown, and the blue shawl she clutched at her throat. I saw her looking malevolently at me, and heard her tittering laughter, as my captor thrust me past her into the house.

The door clashed after us. He lugged me through a dark stone hall, and brought me into the green-curtained room; so thick was the air with the smoke of peat and the reek of an oil-lamp that in a moment my eyes were blinded; and I was coughing, choking.



WHEN my sight cleared, I found myself in a long, low grey room—grey from the smoke and the stone walls. It was lit by a curious hanging lamp of iron, black with soot and oil ; a fire of peat smouldered on the deep hearth ; for furniture the room had in it a long table black with age, and grease, and oil dribbling from the lamp ; heavy black chairs were set on either side of the hearth and at the table, and a black press standing against the wall, its brass fittings green and corroded. The brass candlesticks upon the chimney-piece were green and corroded, too ; the curtain drawn before the window was green and moth-eaten ; the floor was sanded ; the rafters above were black with soot and dusty cobwebs. My captor pulling me forward,—as the old woman waited by the door presently to admit the other rider—dropped me like a sack of meal on to a chair ; and straddled before the fire, stretching his arm cramped by the weight of me all that while in saddle.

Blinking up at him I saw him for a huge fellow ;

he must have stood six feet in height, and was of a great breadth of shoulder and depth of chest. As his sleeve slipped back from his hairy forearm I saw its swelling muscles, and understood ruefully the ease with which he had held me. His face was handsome in a rough, bold way, though coarse and besotted; his chin and jaws were blue-black from the razor; his hair black and curling; his eyes blood-shot from drink. He wore a battered brown hat, a rough, brown riding coat, with leather breeches and mud-splashed riding boots; his soiled cravat was held by a brooch of flashing red stones. Looking up at him, understanding the strength of the man, for something of good humour in his coarse drunken face I did not fear him, as I feared the crone, whose evil green eyes had glittered at me when my captor thrust me into the house. He grinned down at me, and growled, "So you're well enough for the time, eh, young sir?"

"Well enough—but what's your purpose with me? Why have you brought me here?"

"When you know that," said he, "you'll know as much as I do. Nay, you'll know more."

"You mean that you're hired for this? You're only the servant of an enemy of mine, whose interest it is to keep me out of Rogues' Haven?"

“Rogues’ Haven! So you’ve caught the name?”

“To be sure I know the name,” I answered boldly for the good humour of the fellow. “And know the reason for it. And think I know the name of your principal.”

“Oh, ho! Though he plays his game in secret. You’ll be knowin’ more’n it’s safe for you to know, young sir. And”—with a sudden gesture towards the door—“if you’ll take a word from me, you’ll be wiser, if you keep your mouth shut.”

While yet I blinked at him, I heard the old woman once more unlock the door to admit the big fellow’s companion, who presently entered the room. I saw him for a lean, cadaverous, young man of no great height; his high-crowned hat, his coat, his buckskins, the laces at his throat dandified; he was jauntily flicking his top boots with his riding switch, and his spurs were jingling. An ill-looking fellow,—I marked his pale sneering lips and the sinister light of his green eyes; I feared him as an enemy even as I feared the crone with the blue shawl about her black rags, her evil eyes peering at me, and her jaws working, as she hobbled after him.

“So-ho, Martin, here we are, all safe and snug,” cried the big man from the hearth. “Find

us the tippie in that cupboard of yours, Mother Mag, and then I'll be packing."

"You'll be staying here, my friend Roger," said Martin, coolly, dropping into a chair by the table. "You're to wait until he comes."

"I tell you I'll have my drink and be off," Roger growled, scowling at him. "Who the devil are you to be givin' me orders? I've an affair twenty miles off as ever was by break o' day."

"Yet you'll be staying," the young man insisted quietly. "I'm giving you his orders, not mine. What's it to me whether you go or stay?"

"I'm damned, if I'll wait!" Roger asserted.

"You're damned, if you go," sneered Martin, his eyes flashing up suddenly like two wicked green gems. "Get him the drink, Mother Mag, and he'll be staying—not risking his neck by going."

I saw the red blood rush to Roger's face. I heard him growl and mutter to himself; he straddled still across the hearth. Laughing hoarsely then he cried out, "Ay, the drink, Mother Mag—the drink," and turning his back on Martin, kicked savagely at the fire.

While I sat blinking at them, and wondering whether it should be my Uncle Charles expected at the house, and what bearing his arrival should

have upon my fortunes, the hag, taking a key from the jingling ring at her side, unlocked the press ; and out of its recess drew a bloated bottle of violet-coloured glass ; hugging this to her, she set out four thick, blue goblets, and poured into them some dark spirit or cordial, pausing ere she filled the fourth to point her skinny fingers at me, and then peer at Martin, as if to gather from him whether I was to drink with them.

He replied curtly, “ Ay, pour him a dram,—half a glass—Mother Mag ; he looks about to croak,” and sneered at me.

Roger, swinging round from the fire, took up his glass and tossed off the contents ; snatching the bottle then from Mother Mag he filled up a glass which he handed to me, growling, “ Drink it down, lad ! it’ll put heart into you.” The woman, with a shrill cry, leaped like a cat upon him, seeking to snatch the bottle from him ; holding it above her reach and fending her off from me, he refilled and drained his glass, and set the bottle down once more. She clutched it to her, set in the stopper, and poked it away in the cupboard, all the while chattering to herself and mouthing like some gibbering ape. Taking her own glass then, with so palsied a hand that she surely spilt half the contents, she hobbled to the hearth and crouched down by it, alternately

licking her fingers and sipping her grog,—her green eyes glinting at Roger and me.

I tasted the liquor in the glass, and finding it a spirit that burnt my very lips, I did not drink it, but handed the glass back to Roger, who, muttering "Your health, young master," drained it for me. Martin sat drinking slowly ; Roger, as warming from the stuff, began to stamp impatiently to and fro over the stone floor. Pausing at last by Martin, he demanded, thickly, "What hour's he like to be here ? How long am I to wait in this stinkin' den ?"—at which Mother Mag cackled sardonically, choked and spat, lying back against the chimney-piece red-eyed and gasping.

"He did not say what hour," Martin answered, indifferently. "How should he know what hour the coach would come, or we be here ? Sit down by the fire, man. Get your pipe ; there's tobacco in the jar on the shelf."

"Am I to be kept here all night, when by break o' day I should be about my business ?"

Martin lifted his glass as though to admire its colour in the lamp-light. "Go then, my friend," he said smoothly. "Oh, go by all means ! Only blame yourself, not me, for aught that may happen in the course of a day or so. You'd make

a pretty figure in the cart, Roger, and 'twould need a double rope to hold your body."

"Damn you!" roared Roger, swinging up his hand, but Martin's eyes, watching him intently, and the smile flickering still upon his lips, the big man swung round once more and pointed to me. "You're makin' a sweet song o' hangin', Martin," he muttered. "You're sayin' what your precious gentleman may do or mayn't, as the case may be. Peach on me, you mean—if so be I don't wait for him, and if so be I don't do as I'm told. Only, don't you be forgettin', that 'twas him as told us to hold up old Skinflint's coach, and nab the lad there. And that's robbery by the King's highway,—and get that into your head, and keep it there. And, by God, Martin, if he's got his claws on me, I've got my claws on to him from this night forth; and if he talks of hangin', there's others—ay, there's others. You, Martin, and old Mag here, and him."

"Pish, man," said Martin, coolly, though his look was livid. "Who'd listen to you? Who'd believe you? Old Gavin Masters—eh? He loves you, Roger. He has confidence in you."

Roger stood cursing to himself, demanding finally, "And the lad here,—what's he goin' to do with the lad?"

"How in the devil's name does it concern you,

Galt ? ” cried Martin, with sudden flaming anger. “ You’ve done your share of the work and you’ll be paid for it.”

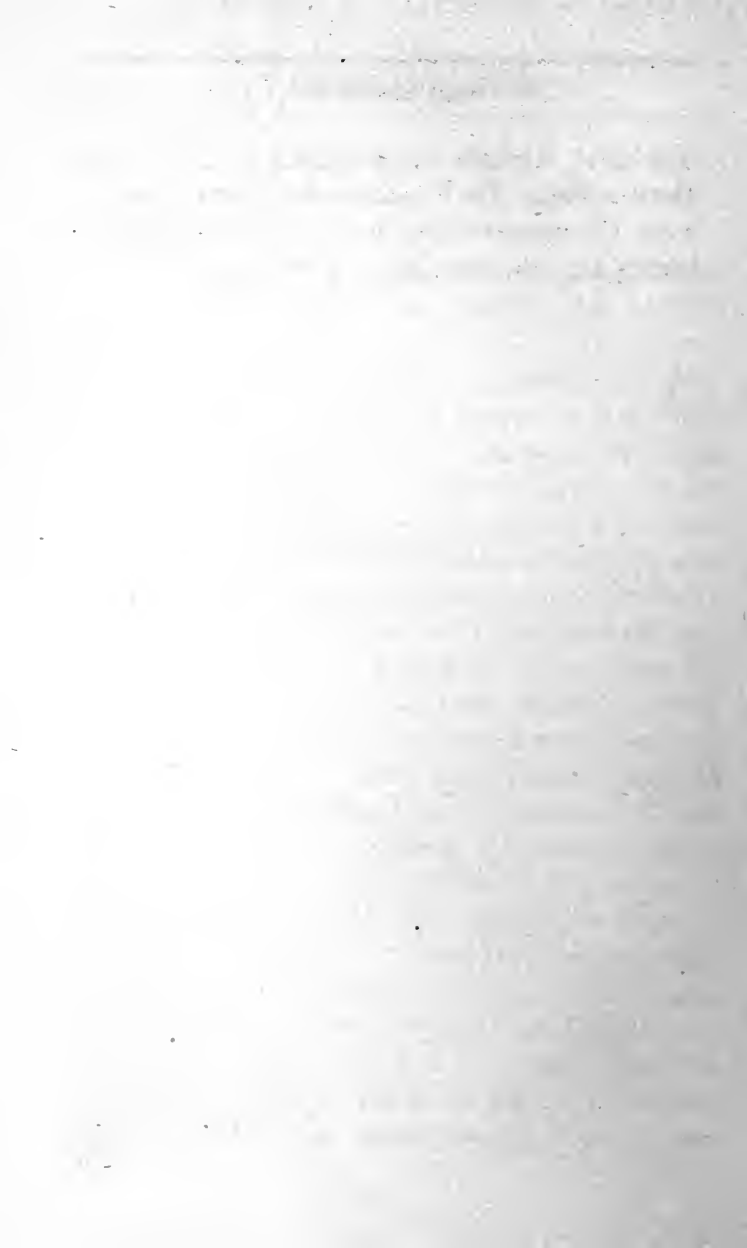
“ Ay, but you answer me ! What’s to be done with the lad ? Hark ’ee, Martin, I’m sick to death of the whole crew of ye. And of none more than yourself, unless it’s himself. I’ve done my work on the roads, and there’s a few the poorer for it ; but I’ve never done aught of a kind with this. Kidnappin’ an’ maybe murder at the finish.”

“ What d’ye mean ? ” Martin asked, drawing back his chair, to be out of reach of Roger Galt’s rising rage, as the drink worked within him.

“ What’s he goin’ to do with the lad there ? ” Roger growled. “ Get him out of the way—oh, ay, I know that, and can guess for why. From the looks of him ! But how’s he goin’ to rid himself of him ? Ship him overseas with Blunt, or what ? Martin, I’ll have no hand in aught that don’t give the lad a chance for his life,—d’ye hear me ? Who’s he ? Dick Craike’s lad as ever was ! And they did for Dick Craike—ay, they did, they did,—years ago.”

Martin, starting up, screeched out, “ Shut your fool’s mouth ! You’re drunk, Roger Galt. The lad’s to be kept here, till he comes. He’ll be here to-night. Tell him what you’ve said to me !

Tell him ! Get the lantern and give me the keys, Mother Mag. We'll lock the lad away upstairs ; when the master comes he'll not be wanting him taking his ease here like a gentleman ! ”



DIRECTING me with a gesture to rise and follow, Martin opened the door into the hall. The woman, taking the lantern, lit it from the fire with a twig. A moment I hesitated, preferring to remain with big Roger Galt, who was inclined to make my cause his own, to following the sinister Martin and old Mother Mag, but Roger had lurched to a chair, and sat there glowering and muttering to himself without further regard for me. Moreover, Martin, observing my hesitation, plucked a pistol from his pocket, and cocking it, swore with a bitter oath to blow out my brains unless I followed him. Roger still paying no heed, I slouched out into the hall.

The woman crept before me ; Martin followed with the pistol pointing at my head ; the lantern showed me presently a dark wooden stairway. It was rotten and riddled with decay ; it creaked dismally beneath us ; the balusters were broken ; as I set my hand against the wall to steady me, going up after the slowly climbing

light, I touched grime and cobwebs ; the startled rats came squeaking and tumbling down the stair. Presently we reached the head of the stair—I have said that the house was two stories only in height ; Mother Mag unlocked a door before me, and the cold air blowing in from the glassless window of the room struck on my face. The crone, standing aside for me to enter the room, leered and mumbled at me as I passed in, urged forward by the prodding of Martin's pistol. I heard the rats scurrying over the floor before me. The wind blowing out the sacking before the window, the moonlight illumined the room,—it was big and bare as the room below it, but the rafters were high above me. A narrow wooden bedstead, with a pile of rags upon it, was propped against the wall ; there was no other furniture save a three-legged stool. An open hearth with a rusted iron brazier stuck in it was at the farther end of the room. Martin, stepping in, demanded of the woman, “ You're sure the fellow will be safe here ? ”

“ You should know, my dear,” the woman tittered, holding to the doorway.

He strode to the window, plucked aside the sacking and tried the iron bars ; satisfied then stepped over to the hearth, asking, “ What of the chimney ? Could he climb it ? ”

“ If he should try,” Mag answered, laughing shrilly, “ he’d only stick there and choke for soot. More, it’s near blocked with the bricks fallen in it. I heard ’em tumble in a gale two year back, and thought the Stone House was all comin’ down about my ears. Ay, but you knows the Stone House well as I do, Martin, and for why are you askin’ ? ”

“ For why, Mother Mag,” he snarled. “ You should know for why. Not the devil, your master, could save you from—you know from whom—if he comes, and finds the young dog missing. Ay, and he knows enough to stretch that scraggy neck of yours, well as big Roger Galt’s below. Look to it, Mother Mag,—d’ye look to it ! ”

She cowered and mumbled to herself ; he, poking his head forward to look up the chimney, brought down a shower of soot upon him, and, cursing foully, he drew back, and made for the door.

“ You’ll lie here for the night,” he said to me. “ You’ll be safe and snug here for the night. Don’t be trying to break out and get away, for I’ll be within hearing of you the night through. Out of this, Mother Mag.”

“ What’s your purpose with me ? ” I asked, dully. “ Why was I brought here ? ”

"You'll know," he answered, laughing his hateful laugh. "You'll know. But I'm paid only to catch and cage you, not to answer questions."

"If it's only pay," said I, "a word from me to Mr. Bradbury——"

"Bah, I'd not trust Bradbury living, and Bradbury lying in the road when we left him looked more like a corpse than Mother Mag there. Lie down and sleep,—you'll get nothing from me," and pulling the door to with a crash, he left me.

I ran instantly to the window, and dragged back the sacking; the bars of iron, set there, I took it, for defence in the old days, were bedded firmly in the stone; there was no hope for me to crawl between them. The recurrent light of the cloud-harried moon showed me the nature of my prison; the dust lay thick upon the rotting floor; the oaken panels were riddled by the rats, and dropping in decay from the stone walls; the black, cobwebbed rafters, were high above me. I believed that a trap-door in the ceiling opened beneath the roof; I could hear the rats scurrying over my head. I turned back to the window; and the moon showed me the cobbled courtyard, the high stone wall, the rim of the bowl, in which the house lay, rising blue-black beyond; boughs

tossing in the wind upon the rim ; through the wild crying of the gale overhead, its battering on the house, I thought I heard the distant drumming of the sea. Again I tried to wrench the bars apart ; their red rust had run into the stone and mortar and set them there only the more firmly ; though I tested each bar with the full strength of my arms, none shifted. Could I but force them sufficiently apart for me to wriggle through, the drop to the ground would be dangerous but not impossible for me. Staring upwards then I could see nothing of the roof owing to the thickness of the wall and the depth of the window. No, I was held securely ; when I tried to peer up the chimney, I found it blocked as Mother Mag had said ; the door of thick oak, though mouldering, was clamped with iron. I took it that the house had been built years since, maybe in the troublous times of Charles the Martyr—built stoutly for protection against marauders in that lonely hollow of the moorlands. On the thick high wall about the courtyard I believed that I could discern rusting iron spikes. And knowing myself held fast in a prison chosen for me by my Uncle Charles—surely by him—and guarded by his rogues, I must have despaired but for my hope that Mr. Bradbury might have survived the attack upon the coach, and would

not rest till he found and rescued me. I recalled his apprehension when we were overtaken by the darkness, and his play with the pistols before our disaster. I remembered seeing him flung out from the door of the coach, and the red discharge of his pistols, as they struck the road. How had the astute Mr. Bradbury come thus to underestimate his man, Charles Craike, with consequences disastrous to himself and likely to prove disastrous to me ?

I was in no mood for lying down on the wretched pallet. I tore off my cravat and bound it about my broken head. I was sick and weary, but I feared to sleep, lest they come upon me silently in the dark, and make an end of me. And I knew that he, whose name they would not utter before me, but who was surely Charles Craike, was expected at the house that night ; I determined to overcome my heavy weariness, and stay awake awaiting his coming. I heard their voices, as I stood by the bed. Roger growling yet, and Martin laughing his mocking laugh, while they sat waiting in the room below, whence came that thin smoke rising through the rotting floor. I knelt down then, and with my hands I widened the breach in the rotting wood, hoping to hear what passed between these rogues, and what they plotted against me. The light

shone soon more clearly ; a chink in the ceiling below was visible ; surely I had only to lie down and press my ear against the breach to hear their very words.

I was deterred from my purpose by a sudden cry from the gate, and the loud baying of a hound at the rear of the house. Starting up, I stole to the window, and drawing back the sacking, set me to watch who came. I heard the doors below me open and clash ; presently I saw the lantern shine through the dark,—for the clouds held the moon, though it seemed rapidly to approach to a break between cloud and cloud. Overhead the wind went wailing ; it beat against the house, as though to tumble it to ruins ; I stood shivering, for the bitter cold of the night and for my terrors ; the strip of sacking bellied out like a sail as I clung to it. And to the crying of the wind he came.

The moon broke through the clouds ; the wet cobbles of the court below me gleamed like a pool of silver water. He came riding swiftly to the house, leaving Mother Mag to secure the gate ; I saw him sitting stiffly upon a great black horse, a black cloak flapping all about him. A gust swept his hat from his head, but his hand caught it ; his silver-white hair was blown out in disorder. He looked up, as he drew in before the

door ; momentarily I saw a proud and baleful face, cut like a piece of fine white ivory. I saw the very shining of his eyes, as moonlight and the lamplight from the house played fully on him ; and on the instant, indeed, I understood from that cruel face—like, yet so much unlike, my father's—none whom this man hated or feared might hope for mercy from him.

And thus for the first time I looked upon my Uncle Charles Craike of Rogues' Haven.

AS the gentleman entered the house, I slipped back to the bed, purposing, when I was assured that he would not come directly to my room, to test whether I could hear through the break in the ceiling of the room below and the parting of the flooring under my feet what should pass among my enemies. I heard him enter the room ; I heard Mother Mag's return to the house and the clashing of the doors, as she made all fast. I dropped down then, and lying prone, found that by pressing my ears against the parting in the floor I could hear distinctly. And I found the gentleman berating Roger by the fire.

"Mark you, my man, I'll have no more of this," he was declaring, in clear, authoritative tone. "You'll serve me when I will, or how I will, or take the consequences."

"Mr. Charles Craike," growled Roger, "I tell you I'll not endure too much from you or any other man. I'll serve you when I will, and as it suits me. Set the runners on to me—ay, set them—it won't be the first time by a many as

I've shown 'em a clean pair of heels. I've an affair of my own callin' me miles from here ; I should have been off long since."

"Peace, fool!" said Mr. Craike, contemptuously.

"And listen to me," Roger blustered, "if you'd peach on me, I know enough to pull you down."

"My good Roger Galt," said my uncle, laughing easily. "I'm not questioning that you've served me as well this night as you've served me on any other occasion. And I'll pay you well, as I've paid you always. Where's the boy, Martin?"

"Fast up above," Martin replied.

"And Bradbury?"

"Lying in the road like a dead man when we left him."

"I trust," said Mr. Craike, piously, "that you've done him no hurt beyond repair."

"No more than he did himself," said Martin, laughing. "He'd a pair of barkers with him, when the coach pulled up. He fell out into the road ; his pistols fired ; and he lay there in the mire."

"And you took the boy and have him safely here. Ay, ay."

"Would you see him?" Martin asked.

"Oh, not I! What's he like, though?"

“As like his father,” Roger broke in heavily, “as one barker’s like its pair.”

“His father! Ay! His father was passionate—lacked discretion; the boy’s the offspring of his father’s folly,” with a laugh at which I raged silently, understanding the slur he put upon me.

“And what now of the lad?” Roger persisted. “What would you do with him, now he’s here?”

“Friend Roger Galt, you’re asking too much of me and my affairs!”

“Ay, ay, but what’s the answer? You’ve kidnapped him; would ye ship him overseas? That I’ll not quarrel with; he’d have a chance for his life, and he’d fare none so ill, for a rope’s end’s well for a lad.”

“Maybe that is my purpose,” my uncle said, coldly.

“But no more than that!” cried Roger Galt. “By God, Mr. Craike, I’ll not have him done to death by Mart and Mother Mag or any other of your rogues. I’ll not!”

“He’s so commended himself to you,” my uncle sneered.

“He’s like his father. Your brother Dick treated me kind as a lad. He’d give me a guinea when you’d have no more for me than a fine word.”

“And you’d stand a friend to his bastard, eh?”

"I'm none too sure as the lad's base-born," said Roger, stoutly. "He's something of the look of Mary Howe about him, as well as the looks of you Craikes. And Mary Howe was not the lass to listen to the talk of Dick Craike, or any man, unless a ring and a book went with it. No,—it's because the boy's born a Craike you'll not have him meet old Edward."

"Silence!" Mr. Craike's command cut through the air like a whip. "I'm accountable to no man, Galt, for what I do. You presume to preach to me—you, my hang-dog; you've threatened me a while since. Threatened! Would any take your word for aught?"

"Any knowing you, Mr. Craike."

"Have it so, then! Match yourself against me. At least this is assured—your hanging for a highwayman; are you so confident that you will lay me by the heels? Come! Are you so confident—knowing me?"

But Roger Galt answered only with a string of oaths.

"You're not so confident," my uncle said, coolly. "You bluster only, Roger, when the drink's in you. And when you're sober—seldom, Roger—you're no fool; you're ready to serve me, knowing I pay. Your interests are mine, friend Roger."

“Ay, that’s well enough. But what of the boy, now you’ve got him in this ken?”

“The boy,” said Mr. Craike, “will come to no hurt at my hands. Have it so, if you will! He does not come yet to my father’s house; have that so! He goes overseas with Ezra Blunt, when the rogue makes port. He’ll go overseas and be set ashore to work his way home as he may. He’ll suffer no worse; but he’ll not make Rogues’ Haven in these two years to be. And till Blunt is here, Mother Mag and you, Martin, look to it that the fellow lie snugly at the Stone House. And if Bradbury live,—God rest him, body and soul—and raise the hue and cry, look to it that no one find the fellow here. Keep him fast, keep him hidden—d’ye hear me?—fast and hidden! I’ve your wage with me, Roger, though not yours yet, Martin, or yours, Mother Mag. Hark to the chink of the coin, Roger! Did you ever empty such saddle-bags?—Why, what the devil—?” for the hag had screeched out shrilly.

“What’s fallin’? What’s fallin’?” cried Mother Mag. “Where’s the dust all fallin’ from?”

“Rats gnawin’ through,” said Roger. “The ken’s haunted with ’em.”

“Or the boy? What’s he doing this while?” Mr. Craike demanded, furiously.

Instantly I started up, and dusted my breeches and jacket ; I lay down on the bed, as Martin came rushing up the stairs. But I made no pretence of sleep when he pulled the door open, and flashed the lantern on me. I sat up and stared at him. He swung the lantern over me ; observing the dust yet upon me, and the length of my body marked in dust upon the floor, he muttered, " So you've been eaves-dropping, you dog—hey, you dog ? "

I answered him boldly, though my heart beat the devil's tatoo within my breast, " Ay, I've heard every word, my friend. And say this from me to my kinsman, Charles Craike—as he has not the courage to face me here—that for all I've suffered and am to suffer from him here, he'll pay me yet. If further hurt come to me ; if I am put aboard Blunt's ship, I've friends—not Mr. Bradbury alone—who'll never rest till he's laid by the heels. Ay, and tell him this from me : that for his foul lie against me and my mother, I'll have a reckoning yet from him and his."

TO be sure, I passed the most dismal of nights locked in the upper room of the Stone House. Whether Martin had had the courage to bear my message to Charles Craike I could not tell ; I heard the mumble of their voices in the room below, but I did not set my ear again to the breach in the flooring-boards. I heard the doors creak and crash presently, and, slipping to the window, I saw the gentleman mount and ride away. I lay down then on the bed, spreading my greatcoat over the miserable rags ; and when Martin and Mother Mag climbed the stairs, and entered the room, that the fellow might satisfy himself of my safety, and further test the security of bars and chimney, I lay there paying them no heed, nor did they speak to me. But the woman brought me a pitcher of water, and bread and meat upon a platter, of which I was glad, for I was fainting with hunger ; she set my supper down upon the floor, and they left me, locking the door upon me.

I ate my supper, and surveyed my fortunes.

Indeed, they were of the poorest. My one hope was that Mr. Bradbury was no more than stunned by his fall ; and would take prompt steps to find and rescue me. Else, I must be held a prisoner in the Stone House, till the seaman Blunt made port. I was then to be put aboard his ship and taken overseas. My uncle's assumption was—unless he purposed more particularly to instruct Blunt regarding the disposal of me—that I could not possibly return during his father's lifetime ; though by entail I might be master of Rogues' Haven, I took it that the gentleman by then would be in complete enjoyment of his father's private fortunes, and would set me at defiance, if ever I returned ; but I believed that Charles Craike would so plan it that I should never return. Lying on the miserable bed, hearing the winds blow drearily about the house, I writhed at the thought that the man who had done my parents bitter hurt should have me in his toils. Was there hope from Roger Galt, gentleman of the road, hating Charles Craike ? Though Galt might fret under the yoke, Craike was surely his master.

Awhile I heard the folk of the house stirring below me ; once I heard the stairs creak, and believed that Martin or the woman crept up to my door. Indeed, I fancied that I caught the

sound of breathing by the door ; I lay still, wondering whether they would come upon me secretly in the dark, and make an end of me. But it seemed that the man or the woman came only to be assured that I was not endeavouring to break gaol ; as satisfied, the watcher crept presently down the stairs.

But would they yet come upon me in the dark ? At the thought I rose and set the stool, with pitcher and platter, against the door ; the crash, if the door were opened, would surely rouse me. I could not lie awake all night ; I could not for the weariness clouding my brain. I fell at last asleep ; yet, such was the influence of my fears upon me that I woke repeatedly, believing that my enemies were in the room. At first I woke only to see moonlight leap white and spectral through the window, as the sack flapped in the wind ; then to lie quaking in the darkness, hearing the gale, which was violent the night through ; always when I woke I heard it hammering on the house ; I heard the rats scurry, and bounce, and squeak beside my bed.

No one came in the night. I was awake by daybreak, and rose to stare out on drear grey fog ; the gale had abated. All about the house the dank fog lay in the hollow ; I could not see as far as the stone wall from my window. Looking

about the mouldering room, I set my thought upon the trap-door through the ceiling ; it was clouded with dust-weighted cobwebs, and clearly had not been opened for many years. I believed that I could raise it, and reach the roof ; had there been more furniture within the room, I might have climbed to it ; the bedstead would not reach half-way, and by its rottenness would crash under my weight.

But the inmates of the Stone House were now astir. I heard the working and splash of a pump, the sound of an axe, the clatter of heavy boots on the cobbles. I heard muttering and movement in the room below me. Hungry and impatient, and less afraid now that the day was come, I waited until, at last, Mother Mag and a young man climbed the stairs and entered the room. The fellow seemed of gipsy blood,—black, towsled hair poking about his ears, his eyes dark and furtive, his skin copper-red,—as ill-looking a rogue as Martin. He wore leather breeches, leggings, and hobnails, a fustian jacket over a ragged shirt ; he had silver rings in his ears. He was clearly of a lithe strength ; he carried a blackthorn, and he eyed me with a surly and vengeful look, as if he would use his cudgel on me for any pretext I might afford him.

Mother Mag, poking her skinny fingers at me,

croaked, "You can come downstairs, young master. You can wash you at the pump, if you will wash. When you've fed, you'll be free to walk the court, if you will. But don't try to run away! Don't try,"—and laughed shrilly, and pointed at the young man.

He grinned at me, flourished his blackthorn suggestively, and gripped my wrist as if to demonstrate his strength; his fingers clasped on my flesh like a steel trap. But he said not a word, as, nodding, I followed the woman down the stairs; he came after, pressing my heels.

As we reached the hall, Martin appeared in the doorway of the long room; seeing him, yellow-skinned and malevolent, I detected still a resemblance in build and feature to the gipsy lad; and believed them kinsmen, though Martin aped the appearance of a gentleman, and the rustic was rough and ragged, and reeked of the stable. Martin gave me no greeting; I followed Mother Mag through the hall into a great kitchen, damp, close, and cheerless, but for the peat smouldering on the hearth. Rashers were frying in a pan; provision of bacon, smoked fish and ropes of onions hung from the sooty rafters.

"Would ye wash?" Mother Mag asked, leering at me.

"To be sure, I'd wash, thank 'ee," said I.

She took down a coarse towel from a peg and flung it to me ; she pointed to soap upon the bench, " You can wash at the pump," she said. " Bart'll go with you. Don't 'ee go tryin' to run, young master, now don't 'ee. For you'll never get to the wall ; and you'll never climb if you run so far —— " and, unlocking the door, pointed, laughing, at the hound chained at the foot of the steps.

The hound, leaping up, bayed at me ; Bart, clattering down the steps, struck at it with his cudgel ; it leaped and bayed at him, plunging as though it would snap its chain. He uttered not a word, seeming to take delight in the torment of the savage brute, and beating it back at last into the kennel ; though, when I descended, it sprang at me, and, but for my jumping aside, it would have borne me down. Mother Mag laughed shrilly from the door ; Bart said not a word or yet a word while he mounted guard over me at the pump. I took it that the fellow was dumb, but, as I plied the towel, I said carelessly, to test him, " How long am I to be held in this ken, lad ? " He answered nothing, only swung his cudgel, grinning at me. I took a hasty look about me ; the stone wall was built high about the cobbled yard ; away from the house were low stone out-buildings ; beyond the wall I could see trees dimly through the thinning fog.

I said then, "You're paid to keep me here. Whatever you're paid, my friends will pay you more. D'ye understand me? If you'll take a message to Mr. Bradbury, whom I think to be at Rogues' Haven——"

With black and menacing look he gripped my arm, and pointed back to the house. So I must needs tramp back to my prison; though I was tempted to make a dash for freedom, when he loosed my arm, I was debarred by the sight of Martin standing, pistol in hand, by the steps. He, sweeping off his hat with a mocking bow, as I returned, my endurance left me. While the hound raved at me, I cried furiously to Martin, "I warn you all you'll pay for this. I've other friends than Bradbury, who'll never rest till they've found me. By the Lord, you'll rue the day!"

"Brave words," he sneered. "Blunt'll make port this day or to-morrow. And you'll lie snug enough, till you're set aboard."

I passed by him into the kitchen. Mother Mag had set bread and bacon and a mug of ale on the table for me. I sat down and ate hungrily, while the three watched me from the fireside, saying not a word to me, and the great hound bayed yet without the door.

NOW, the four days I passed at the Stone House I was like to die for weariness and suspense. The routine was unbroken. I ate my breakfast in the kitchen with the woman and the two men watching me ; for an hour thence I was free to exercise myself in the courtyard ; all the days the grey fog hung dank in the hollow, and the cobbles were wet and slippery. The silent Bart was always within reach of me ; Martin watched me from the door, and the hound raved by the steps. Thence I was locked in my room for the remainder of the morning ; again brought down for dinner, again to exercise in the courtyard ; finally to be locked in my room for the night. At dark, Mother Mag brought me my supper of bread and water ; ere midnight, Martin surveyed my room, to be assured that I was not attempting to break out. I saw nothing of Roger Galt all this while. I assumed that he had ridden away from the Stone House ; through the parting in the floor I could hear of a night only the mumblings of Martin and Mother Mag ; Bart

never bore them company. From the certain likeness among the three, I came to believe them all of the one evil brood ; the age of the hag, I thought, should make her their grandame, though Martin treated her and Bart with the sneering insolence which he displayed towards me. I knew that they expected daily the arrival of Captain Ezra Blunt, who, I gathered from Martin, was master of the brig, *Black Wasp*,—whether he was trader, smuggler, or pirate of the American coasts I did not learn, but rather assumed, and dreaded all the more the life awaiting me aboard.

But of Mr. Bradbury all this while ? Was he dead ? Or was he searching for me, and on that lawless coast finding officers of the law poor assistance to him ? Would he yet come to the Stone House, and would he come in time ?

Now, the grey afternoon of the fourth day, I was looking drearily out of my window, when I heard a voice calling from the gate. Mother Mag, hobbling from the house, admitted Roger Galt ; he rode up, mounted on his great horse ; by the flush of his reckless face and by his rolling in saddle, he had been drinking deeply. Spying me at the window, he essayed to flourish his hat, and almost fell from his horse in this

endeavour. I heard him presently wrangling with Martin in the room below,—the deep booming of his voice, the smash of a glass, as if he had failed to pour himself a dram, or had slung a goblet at Martin's head. But I paid little heed to him, for my acute interest in the fellows whom Mother Mag admitted on Roger's heels into the courtyard. Twenty or more,—sunburned seamen in loose breeches, rough jackets and red caps, a cutlass at every man's belt; a few country folk, men and women, driving a train of laden pack-horses. Smugglers! I knew then the use of the Stone House, lonely and near the sea, and guessed how the silks and laces and brandies and what-not were secreted in its old cellars for distribution through the countryside. There rode with these folk a rakish red-faced fellow on a cob; his blue cloak, blown back in the wind, showed me his blue coat ornate with gold lace and buttons, his white breeches poked into high, mud-stained boots; he had a black hat thrust down upon his brows. All these folk, entering the yard with much sound and clatter, passed about the house, and out of view, Mother Mag following and calling for Bart. I heard from beyond the house, presently, the rolling of barrels over cobbles, the voices of the smugglers, and the baying of the hound. So

Blunt was come, with his seamen and his smuggled goods ; so I was soon to be handed over to him to be shipped overseas. Trembling, I waited by the window, till the grey afternoon gave place to dusk and dark, with a cold wind blowing, ever gaining strength and ever crying out around the house, as though to share in the ever-swelling tumult of the smugglers. For the quiet of the Stone House was at an end ; it seemed that Captain Ezra Blunt—if the fellow with the copper-red face were Blunt—and his folk would spend a gay night ashore.

When the rolling of the barrels and the tramping of the horses ceased, I heard the company clatter into the kitchen,—Mother Mag's voice was shrill as a fiddle-string over their laughter and the baying of the hound. Their leader left them soon to join Martin and Roger in the room below me ; lying with my ear to the crack in the floor, I heard Martin address him as "Blunt." It appeared that Galt was now lying drunk by the fire, for said Martin, "Our friend here's been unloading an earlier cargo of yours, Mr. Blunt. Don't mind him ! Sit you down and taste a dram !"—and I heard the clink of glasses, and Blunt's voice at first so low that I could not make out his words.

"Will you be making back to the *Black Wasp*

to-night ? ” Martin asked. “ Mr. Craike would have a word with you at the Haven.”

I believed that Blunt answered that he had already met Mr. Craike. Martin proceeded, “ Don’t let these men of yours get too drunk, then. You know what you’re to take away with you.”

“ Ay, ay,” Blunt answered. “ Young Craike.”

“ Howe’s his name,” Martin asserted. “ We’ve kept him safe for you. So don’t let your men get too drunk ! ”

“ Oh, they’ll be sober enough by dawn,” Blunt answered easily. “ If not, you and Bart can give me a hand down to the ship with him. Galt’s very drunk.”

“ He’s always drunk nowadays,” said Martin. “ Don’t trouble about him. But Mr. Craike surely gave you to understand that the lad was to be got aboard in the dark. He must have told you of the old fool Bradbury, and the hunt he’s making. Gavin Masters is backing him. There’s talk over at the Haven of runners down from London. We’ll be having ’em here, if Masters sets his wits to work. We’ll get the lad away now, if you’re wise and willing, Blunt.”

“ I’m not willing,” Blunt answered angrily. “ I’m weary to death. I’ll have supper and a bottle or more from old Mag’s cupboard, before

I stir this night. Damn Craike ! What's Craike to me ? ”

“ Your master,” Martin snarled ; then, as though apprehensive of my listening, he lowered his voice ; Blunt following suit, I heard them muttering together ; and, drearily, I rose and sat down on the bed. I was to be taken out of the Stone House that night, and be set aboard Blunt's ship, *Black Wasp*, and that under the very nose of Mr. Bradbury and his folk. Unless they came that night ! I lifted my hands to heaven then, and prayed that they might come to the house in time, or intercept my captors on the way down to the sea. But I sat in the dark for hours, and none came nigh me ; below, the carousal rose to tumult.

I heard their voices roaring a chanty ; I heard drunken laughter ; once I heard the sounds of strife, smash of bottles, clash of steel, fierce cries ; this uproar ceasing presently, the uproar and the singing continued far into the night. All the while the wind rolled about the Stone House ; when I peered out, I saw the moon, now at the full, cloud-chased ; the light alternated swiftly with dark in the room, as the wind blew the sacking to and fro. Ever the smugglers rioted within, and the wind was riotous without.

Other folk came to the house in the night ; at

every cry at the gate I would leap to my feet, hoping against hope that Mr. Bradbury and the searchers after me were there ; peering out, I saw in the moonlight only seamen come, bringing still the smuggled cargo from the ship, and country folk with teams to carry it away for distribution ; the sounds of discharge and loading from the courtyard were added to the sounds of carousal in the house itself.

Not till long after moonrise did Mother Mag bring me my supper ; this night, she brought a mug of steaming spirits with bread and meat ; when she had set it down, she giggled shrilly at me ; caught at my sleeve with her skinny claw, and cried, “ Eat and drink, young master,—drink while your grog’s hot ! You’re to travel far this night, and it’s bitter cold. Drink ! ”

Her eagerness warned me, of course, against the grog. I answered, “ I’m not thirsty. I’ll not drink. Leave it there ! ”

She mouthed at me, and shook her fist at me ; but, going out, paused at the door to shriek at me, “ Whether you drink or no, master, you’re going from here to-night. Going, and never coming back ! ” Dragging the door to with a crash, she descended the stair,

AS the night wore on, the clamour dulled ; the roisterers were surely drunken or wearied ; few seemed astir. I heard the mumble of voices still from the room below me ; occasionally the shred of a chanty from the kitchen ; at times, the clatter of shoes over the cobbles of the yard, and the outcry of the hound. But ever the wind blew through the night, seeming to cry to me concerning great waters storm-tossed, whereon I should be sailing after this night to the port of no return. Night drew toward the hour before dawn ; the moon was long since lost in massing clouds packed high against the heaven by the wind. Lord, how the wind battered at the house, making new clamour when the clamour died below ; always it cried to me of storm-tossed waters,—I had this sense upon me, even when my overwrought mind growing dull, I fell asleep upon the bed, and I had the sense still in my dreams. But suddenly I woke with a start and a cry, to understand that pebbles were pattering through the bars and falling into the room, and that a

voice was muttering below the window, "Young Craike,—hey, young Craike!" I snatched the sacking back, and in the grey dawn saw a dark figure perched upon a ladder, his head a foot or so below the sill.

"Galt!" I whispered.

"Hist! They may have heard the stones. Lord, how you slept! D'ye hear them stirring?"

"No! No! Help me!"

"Can you slip through the bars?"

"No, they're set too close and firm."

He muttered, "Bart's sleepin' on the stair and Martin's in the hall. The woman's got the key. Can you reach the roof by the chimney?"

"Blocked with brick!"

"No other way?"

"A manhole in the ceiling. If I could only reach it."

"If you can only break out of that room, I'll take you out of this. My horse is saddled, waiting. I forgot those bars."

I pressed my face down against the bars and whispered, "If you could raise the ladder, we could pass it through the bars. It'd get me to the trap-door. There's sure a way out through the old roof. And a coil of rope, if there's one at hand. Tie that to the ladder."

Grunting he descended ; presently I saw him setting a barrel below the window, and fixing a coil of rope to a rung of the ladder. He climbed on to the barrel, gripped the ladder, and raised its head towards the window. I caught the ladder, tilted it, and presently, rejoicing, had it in the room, with no more sound than the wind should hide from the drunken rogues below. Setting the ladder against the wall, and hitching the coil of rope about my arm, I climbed, and to my joy reached easily the trap-door above me. Exerting all my strength, I strove to force the trap-door upwards. Lord, the shower of dust that descended, as the door lifted, blinded me ; broken slate or brick fell with the dust, and the crash on the floor seemed fit to wake the dead. But, blindly struggling upwards, and gripping a rafter, I pulled myself from the ladder, and squeezed under the half-opened trap into the loft above my room.

An instant I lay in the dust and litter, exhausted,—the rats went scurrying all about me ; I heard the flapping of birds under the roof. Struggling to my shaking knees, I forced the trap back into its place, and without pausing to listen whether the fall of rubbish into the room had roused the house, I groped forward through the blackness, my hope being that I should find a trap

opening on the roof itself, or that, with the rottenness of the slates and the timbers I might break through, and coiling my rope about a chimney, lower myself sufficiently to drop to the ground. But as yet all was dark about me ; a thick litter of dust and feathers lay under my feet ; groping still, I touched the slanting roof, but thrusting with my hand found it yet set firmly for all the decay of the years ; I believed that I heard hoarse voices without the house, or the growling of the wind upon the roofs. Creeping forward still, I rejoiced to feel a cold draught of air blow upon me, and to see pale light through many chinks. Loose slates, rotten wood, surely a decaying patch in the roof, I dared to stand erect then, though fearing that the mouldering, worm-eaten rafters would give way beneath me, and I should crash into one of the upper rooms of the Stone House.

And as I lurched up, with a crash and splintering of slates, I broke through the rotten roof ; I was nigh the chimney stack ; I could see the leaden gutters below me,—birds flew out in a whirl. I could see Roger Galt standing by his horse away from the house ; I could hear the outcry of the hound,—none of the folks save Roger seemed astir. I wriggled out from the hole in the roof, though at first the slates cracked

like thin ice beneath me ; and I began slowly to creep towards the chimney stack, finding my hold in the breaks of the slates and the thick growths of moss stuck closely to them. The roof held me ; but, ere I reached the chimney, the light was strong ; had anyone come out of the Stone House I must have been clear to view, though the sound of the wind hid the rasping of my body over the slates. And slowly, with the wind beating upon me as if to cast me down, I brought the rope about the chimney, and, securing it, let myself slide down gradually to the gutter ; gripping rope and gutter, I lowered myself over the edge. On the instant, the hound broke into furious clamour ; a cry sounded below me ; Martin was roaring, " Bart ! Blunt ! Come here ! Damn you—here ! "

I was swinging now down the rope ; at the end of the length I was little below the gutter. At the alarm I lost my grip, and fell—by some chance into a pile of bales of smuggled stuffs that they had left lying under the wall ; though the breath was knocked out of my body, and I lay there gasping an instant, I was unhurt. I started up ; dropped from the bales on to the cobbles, and was staggering off ; but, coming in a rush from the house, the rogues were upon me. Martin and Bart had gripped me ; struggling wildly, I was

borne backwards ; on the instant came Roger Galt, riding thunderously upon them. His riding-whip cracked upon Bart's head ; his horse nigh trod Martin down ; Roger's great hand gripped my collar, and swung me up before him.

Martin was screeching, " Galt ! You'll hang for this ! Galt ! Damn you ! Stop ! " His pistol cracked after us, as Roger, turning his horse, set him at full speed from the house. After us they came pell-mell,—Martin and Blunt and his crew ; I heard shots and their roaring voices. The gate was barred against us ; swinging back under the wall, Roger Galt suddenly put his horse to it, and with a shock that almost drove my senses from me, the horse brought us safely over.

We were away then at a gallop, and the clamour from the Stone House was dying on the wind.

ROGER GALT was laughing triumphantly. He roared in my ear, "So you'll not go sailing overseas yet awhile, John Craike, to pleasure Uncle Charles. Blunt'll never earn his guineas for your kidnapping."

"Thanks to you! Will they come after us, do you think?"

"There's not a man among 'em has a horse can match mine. Save Martin! And he'll not dare. I vow by now Martin's gallopin' like the devil to Craike House with the bad news for Charles."

"Yes, and you're like to suffer for it at Craike's hands."

He answered lugubriously, "Ay, I'm like to suffer for it if I remain in this part of the country. But I'll be riding elsewhere,—when I've set you down. I'm not so much afraid of Craike or aught that he may do, that I'll dance to his fiddling always."

"Why d'ye help me now?"

"For no more than knowin' that you're Dick Craike's son."

"He was your friend ? "

"Ay, friend and master."

"You said that he'd been put out of the way, as I'd be put out of the way. What did you mean by that ? "

"He was shipped overseas, I've heard tell."

"You don't know ? "

"No, I don't know."

"Whither do you take me now ? "

"Come to think of it now," he answered, laughing, "I hadn't thought of it before. Not to Rogues' Haven."

"Do you know Mr. Bradbury ? "

"I've heard tell of him."

"He's with old Gavin Masters—whoever he may be. Will you take me to him, or set me down on the way to Masters' house ? "

He answered uneasily, "I'll set you down near his house. I'll not wait on old Sir Gavin,—I'm that modest, Mr. Craike. He's a gentleman. He's a justice—as Charles Craike's a justice." His laughter sounded out on the wind. "Ay, I'll take you near enough. Get on, old horse ! Get on ! "

We were out then from the green cup in which the Stone House lay. Looking back from the ridge, ere the trees took us into their company, I saw the old house stand grey to the morning ;

I saw a confusion of figures all about it ; I saw a rider dashing from the gate and galloping off apace.

“ Martin ! ” growled Roger. “ He’s riding off for Rogues’ Haven to give Craike word. I’ve a mind to cut him off.”

“ Who is Martin ? Bart and he are brothers, aren’t they ? ”

“ Martin and Bart Baynes, ay, they’re brothers, both rogues, spawn of old Mag Baynes’s son Adam,—he that was transported and died some year back. Ay, transported he was, but died. Craike’s men, Mart and Bart—rogues both ! ”

“ Where does Rogues’ Haven lie ? ”

“ That way ”—with a sweep of his hand towards the rocky uplands. “ Away, with the wood all about it.”

“ Why the name ? ”

“ Didn’t you see and hear enough, young sir, in Mag’s house ? ”

“ Smugglers—ay, and worse—is that why ? ”

“ Ay, ay ; and there’s odd tales of old Edward, how his money come—— ” but he broke off—“ I’m not forgettin’ you’re the old man’s grandson.”

“ Forget that I am, and tell me.”

“ There’s odd tales. Maybe he made his

fortune in the East, like any India merchant. He came as honest by it as many another, I've no doubt."

"You mean dishonestly. What was my grandfather?"

He answered, laughing, "A gentleman of fortune, folk say"—and galloped on through the trees and out upon the open moorlands.

Seated before him in saddle, with nigh as much discomfort to me as when he had borne me off to Mag's farm in the night, I fell to pondering over the mystery of old Edward Craike. How had he come by his money? Mr. Bradbury would never tell me, fencing me delicately; Roger Galt would not, but "gentleman of fortune"—it might mean buccaneer, freebooter, pirate, as Henry Morgan or many another. Ever my mother's words recurred to me, "the doomed house"—"ill-gotten wealth"—the thought of her hate of Charles and terror of Rogues' Haven. And the name and the company old Edward kept? Howbeit, I should know soon. When once I was safe with Mr. Bradbury, and the justice Sir Gavin Masters, and the thief-catchers from London. And how would my uncle take all this, and what should be his punishment, after his plot against me—defeated by this gentleman of the road whom he had vowed to hang, if he

should play him false, as Roger Galt had played him !

But my thoughts were yet all aw whirl, even as my body was jolted and jarred before Roger Galt on his great black horse, as now putting his mount to its full speed he galloped over the moors. He descended at last on to a rough and broken road, striking back, as nearly as I might guess, for the highway on which Mr. Bradbury and I had been intercepted. And, suddenly, rounding a bend in the road, we came face to face with four riders, at the sight of whom Roger pulled up abruptly—to snatch a pistol from his holster, loosing his hold upon me, and muttering, “ Jump down ! Quick ! I’ll not stay ! ”

They came onward riding swiftly, as I dropped stiffly to my feet. Roger Galt, with a wave of his hand and a cry, “ Good day to ye, lad,” turned his horse and was off at a gallop, ere I understood who came and why he fled. And standing in the road, I swung round to meet the riders. I saw Mr. Bradbury come riding swiftly through the morning ; beside him a stout gentleman in a scarlet coat as flushed as his jovial face ; after them two hard-looking fellows, who, by their grim visages and rigs, I took for the runners whom Mr. Bradbury had called down from London.

Mr. Bradbury, with an exclamation, pulled up

beside me; but the red-coated gentleman, roaring, "After him! After him! There's Galt! There's our man!" set spurs to his mount and galloped apace down the track, with the two fellows clattering after.

Mr. Bradbury dismounted stiffly; hands outstretched, he came to me, crying in that shrill voice of his, "Why, Mr. Craike—my dear sir! My dear sir!"

"Good morning, Mr. Bradbury," I answered, as he took my hands. "I'm glad to see you."

"But where in the devil's name had they hid you? With whom were you riding? He had cause to fear my friend here, Sir Gavin."

"He's Roger Galt. He took me out of Charles Craike's hands, when he held me prisoner in a farmhouse away on the moors miles from here."

"Galt! A notorious fellow. Highwayman! There's a price on his head."

"Yet my father's friend and mine. I'm safe through him. But for him I should be aboard the ship of one Blunt, smuggler—may be worse; oh, it's been the prettiest of plots, Mr. Bradbury, and I've the wildest of tales for you."

"So!" he said swiftly. "So! Charles Craike thought to trick us, and you've tricked Charles Craike. By heaven, he'll answer for this—by heaven! My dear sir, I've hunted high and low

for you. Charles Craike denied all knowledge of you. Old Mr. Edward would not lift a finger. Lord knows and I guess the story our precious gentleman has told him of you. But I'll lay Charles Craike by the heels yet."

"Mr. Bradbury," said I, "your friend here and the runners follow after Galt. I'd have no hurt come to him, for through him, and him only, despite Craike, I'm here and safe ashore. Not that they're like to take him," as I stared up the road and saw the riders pulling in, while Roger vanished from view. "Charles Craike has sworn that Roger Galt shall pay for this; I'd not have your friend there play Craike's part, and set his hands on Galt."

"I'll have a word with Sir Gavin," Mr. Bradbury assented. "Not that 'twill count, for Sir Gavin is set against the fellow, he's been swearing indeed, for all I might say to the contrary, that not Charles Craike but Galt was responsible for the outrage upon us."

"You took little hurt from your fall, I trust, Mr. Bradbury."

"Little save a bad shaking. I was afoot almost at once. And must step it every foot of the way to the village—there's a tolerable inn there, whither I'll now lead you, Mr. Craike."

"And what then?" I asked.

“Why, surely, we’ll proceed to wait upon your grandfather, sir.”

“Unless my Uncle Charles plans otherwise.”

“Nay, we’ll ride thither this afternoon, sir, if you’re rested and well. But the runners shall go beside our coach, lest Mr. Charles Craike still desire that we shall not meet your grandfather.”

THAT afternoon I drove with Mr. Bradbury to my grandfather's house, and the two thief-catchers rode beside us. The house stood at a distance of five miles from the little village that looked down upon the sea ; from the inn window I had caught sight of Blunt's brig already putting out. It was an ancient dwelling of the Craike family, that my grandfather, enriched by trade in the East, Mr. Bradbury now assured me, had set in repair for his habitation.

For all the outrage of my imprisonment, Mr. Bradbury would have me keep a secret from old Sir Gavin Masters my detention in the Stone House. Let it remain a secret, and let the scandal be hushed, he insisted, until we had had our interview with my grandfather. I had an uneasy suspicion that he believed the old man himself implicated in the plot against me, or at least feared his resentment at interference with a crew of smugglers, with whom he and his son were associated. Committing my cause to Mr. Bradbury, I pleaded exhaustion ; left him to

tell what tale he would to Sir Gavin, and kept my room until the hour of our departure from the inn. I contented myself with insistence that Roger Galt should have due credit for returning me to safety, and should not be held guilty of the sins of Charles Craike and his rogues. What tale Mr. Bradbury told, I knew not; as we drove away, he gave me to understand that Sir Gavin had relinquished the search after Roger; I assumed that the justice himself would not welcome an open breach with the smuggling fraternity—with whom, indeed, I took it from furtive whisperings and black looks at me, the folk at the inn—as, no doubt, the fisher-folk at the village—were in league.

But what was my grandfather's share in the plot of my kin against me I conjectured bitterly. Mr. Bradbury observed that my uncle had established great influence over the old man; that, indeed, the one thought and acted habitually as the other. But he was bent still on my presentation to my grandfather, as if he hoped that Mr. Craike might take a liking to me, and my favour with him counteract the influence of my Uncle Charles. So, cleanly-clad, well-dressed once more, I sat by Mr. Bradbury in his coach, and proceeded with him to Craike House, as if none of the events of the Stone House had

happened ; indeed, my curiosity to learn what manner of man was my grandfather prevailed for the time over perplexity and dread.

We drove always within sound of the sea, though it was hid from our sight for the most ; our way taking us over an old stone road ; but at times, where the cliffs were broken, we saw the waters grey and leaden still for hanging clouds ; the violence of the wind had abated, yet it blew keenly ; always the tang of the sea was in my nostrils. Our road struck at last from the sea inland ; we were driving soon through a deep wood ; this was unbroken, ere we came to iron gates in an old brick wall. A woman, coming out of the gate-keeper's cottage at the sound of coach and riders, stared at us through the bars, but at the sight of Mr. Bradbury's head poking out of the window, and at his curt order, " Open the gates, woman. Mr. Bradbury to see Mr. Craike ! " she unlocked and opened the gates, staring at us as we passed by. I saw her for a big woman, as nut-brown as a gipsy, and as vivid in her red shawl and green kirtle ; a swath of orange-coloured stuff was about her black hair. We drove on, and the runners clattered after us. Looking back, I saw the woman run into the cottage, and reappear presently with a bearded fellow, rubbing his eyes sleepily ; I saw the glint

of big rings in his ears, his rig of wide blue breeches and red-striped shirt,—both remained staring after us, till the trees hid them from us. The coach rolled on through a park, ill-tended, overgrown, a very wilderness ; green darkness dropped about us till we came in sight of Craike House.

It stood amid tall pine and fir trees—a sombre, dreary house ; the ivy holding it in a green net, webbed across shuttered windows, climbing to the very leads, and gripping the chimney stacks. An ancient, crumbling house,—I had a notion that but for the ivy it must fall in ruins to the ground ; a house of gloom from the dark ivy—the evil green ivy, with the black pines and fir trees all about it, with weeds and tangle of flowers before it, where once had been rose gardens ; with nettles and lank green grass upon its lawns. We drove up, seeing no one ; we pulled up before the flight of stone steps leading up to its door,—steps worn by rains of centuries, and by the feet of generations ; steps guarded by stone dragons, wingless and earless from their years, their eyes blinded and their jaws stopped with green moss. Sombre and secret stood the house amid the black cloud of pine and fir trees ; I saw the black clouds lower above it ; I heard the winds cry out about it ; the old trees strain and sigh, and toss

their boughs like arms, in lamentation or in terror for the house,—the doomed house, where my kinsmen dwelt. Afar I heard the drumming of the sea against the rock-bound coast. I had a curious shapeless notion—prescience—that even as all the evil of the house—the ill-gotten fortunes of the house—came from the sea, out of the sea should retribution—vengeance—come.

Mr. Bradbury bade the runners and the coach-boy wait for us. Taking my arm, he climbed the steps with me to the door; its oak was bound with iron in fantastic pattern, and studded with copper nails; the knocker was of copper in the form of a satyr's grinning face,—and all this copper was corroded, and the green stained the door as the evil green of the ivy stained the front of the house. Mr. Bradbury raised the knocker with difficulty; though it clashed heavily, it failed to bring response from the house; whispering to me, "I'd have thought Charles would have been keeping a sharper look out for our arrival than this," he knocked double knocks, until the clank of a chain and the screech of bolts sounded within. The door opened, and an old man stood blinking out at us—an old man, his clean-shaven face shrivelled and brown, and his eyes palely blue; his white hair was powdered,

and his suit of black on his bent and withered body as neat and precise as his linen.

“Mr. Bradbury, sir,” he quavered.

“Your ears are not as sharp as they might be, Thrale,” said Mr. Bradbury, drily. “Pray, open the door to Mr. Craike and me, and tell your master that we have the honour to wait upon him in obedience to his wish.”

Thrale answered in that shaking voice of his—though his eyes looked keenly and wickedly at me, “To be sure, gentlemen, to be sure! Pray step inside!”—and opened the door slowly into the hall. It was a dark and gloomy vault; ere old Thrale closed the door, I caught a glimpse of a hall panelled all in oak, of canvases mouldering in mildewed frames, and of a wide black stairway opposite the door, leading up into darkness. If fanlight above the door or windows at the head of the stair should have lit the hall, all light was kept out by curtains, shutters, or netted ivy; the darkness of night fell with the closing of the door.

Mr. Bradbury, grasping my arm hurriedly, cried out, “Gad, how dark and cold this house is, Thrale! I’m not prepared to take my death of a chill waiting here till you announce us to your master. Go ahead of us, man, and show us into his room immediately—d’ye hear me?” He

adopted a tone of brusque good humour, though well I understood his apprehension of what might yet befall me, if we were left standing in the dark. The dark hung mysterious all about us ; I could feel cold draughts of air ; I believed that I could hear furtive whisperings and footsteps, doors softly opening and closing, hangings waving ; all this might have been the wind without. Certainly I heard Thrale chuckle behind me, as he locked the door and fixed the chain ; he answered Mr. Bradbury, " As you wish, sir."

" Strike a light, Thrale,—d'ye hear me ?—a light. I've no mind to break a leg or my neck in the dark ! A light, Thrale ! "

" Certainly, sir," Thrale's answer floated back to us, as he flitted away in the dark.

" Why, damn the fellow, he's leaving us after all," gasped Mr. Bradbury. " Thrale, you hear me ? Thrale ! Come back, man ! "

But there came no sound save of the whisperings, gliding footsteps, rustlings of hangings waving in the dark, or of the ghostly wind that seemed to haunt the House of Craike. Mr. Bradbury's left hand grasped my arm ; I understood that his right groped in his coat pocket for his pistol. The impress of the blackness and gloom of the house was upon me,

while I had good cause to dread my uncle's plotting ; I stood straining my eyes and ears in the darkness, imagining that figures advanced upon us in the dark. Mr. Bradbury drew me back against the door, muttering, " By the Lord, if the old rogue's not back presently, I'll take upon me to make a dash for the stair and force my way into the master's room."

But he was silent, as a glimmer of light showed through the darkness. Thrale was returning, carrying a silver candlestick ; his face was villainous and livid in the pale light.

" Where the deuce have you been, Thrale ? " cried Mr. Bradbury. " Didn't you hear me call after you ? "

Thrale answered quietly, " I asks pardon, Mr. Bradbury, sir. As you said, I don't hear as well as I might. I'd flint and steel to find,"—and stood blinking at us, with the candlestick lifted high in his bone-white hands.

A skeleton's hands—mere bone—they seemed to me, as the old rogue, at Mr. Bradbury's peremptory order, lit us up the stairs. The glimmer of pale light, the lime-white head, the bone-white hands, the silver candlestick, seemed from his noiseless movement to glide before us. From the head of the stair wide galleries led off to right and left and before us,—galleries shrouded

with dark tapestries. I saw rusty armour standing against the walls. I kicked against a pile of tumbled mail as the old man flitted before us by many fast-shut doors down the corridor to the left. He paused at a high black door, the glimmer of the candle showed me grotesque carvings and tarnished gilding upon it ; he rapped smartly on this door with his bony fingers. No one answering, he opened the door, and swept aside the thick green curtains hanging before it.

The room revealed was high and wide ; only a pale green light crept through the diamond panes of its two windows stained by the mosses of the years and netted with the ivy. For the time I had no eye for its furnishings, but only for the figure in the carved black chair by the fire. He was an old man ; he had been of great stature and strength, his bulk was supported now by faded purple cushions. He seemed to prop himself upon the arms of his chair ; his wide, brown hands were stained with red jewels ; I had an uneasy fancy of blood-smeared hands. His clean-shaven face was very broad, bronzed and congested, his brows were framed in white hair tumbling about his immense shoulders ; his eyes were coal-black beneath ash-grey brows. His whole aspect suggested decaying will, as his body decaying strength. A quilted gown of green and

gold-brocaded silk was corded about his middle ; his bent legs were cased in black silken breeches and hose ; his shoe buckles were set with smoke-blue jewels ; an ebony stick rested by his chair.

“ Mr. Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, stepping swiftly forward and bowing politely, “ I have the honour at last to present your grandson—Mr. John Craike ! ”

IT may have been only the leaping flame upon the hearth, but it seemed to me that colour rose to the old brown face, and that light burned in the coal-black eyes. An instant only, and his aspect was hard and grim. He did not offer his hand to Mr. Bradbury or me ; he seemed still to prop himself upon the arms of his chair ; he said, in tones curiously rich and full for so old a man, " You wrote to me, Bradbury, and Charles answered you at my dictation that I would receive you."

" Well, we are here, sir," said Mr. Bradbury, easily.

" And you are here ! You know me well enough, Mr. Bradbury, to understand my wishes. I do not welcome your visit. I felt bound only to receive you and hear you. Why have you come ? "

Mr. Bradbury, standing forward, sought his snuff-box, and made play with it ; the cold jewels shining white upon his fingers, his eyes hard and keen as his diamonds. " Mr. Craike,"

he said, "our interview with you should surely be in private. Is there any need for Thrale to remain?"

"Set chairs, Thrale, and I'll ring for you—if I need you. Is Mr. Charles in the house?"

"No, sir," answered Thrale, his malignant look marking resentment against Mr. Bradbury. "He's abroad."

"If he return, tell him to come to my room. Set chairs—damn you! Set chairs! Don't stand there like a candle in a draught. Like to be blown out any minute—eh, Bradbury, eh?" and passed from sudden passion to loud laughter.

As Thrale set chairs by the fire for Mr. Bradbury and me, I found the opportunity to look about the room. It was lit by those green panes dully for the lateness of the afternoon, and by the leaping flame. It had been a rich, ornate room; I saw dull gold and faded colours in some sombre painting upon the ceiling; faces on the walls—portraits of gloomy folks much of the aspect of the grim old man looking across the green-veined marble hearth at us. A panelled room with heavy tapestries corrupt with moth and grime, with heavy furniture dark with age, a huge four-poster with black silken curtains, black presses, black table; pale gleam of crystal and silver upon a sideboard, old books in a high

case. Only a Persian carpet by my grandfather's chair and his garish gown and gems lent rich colour to the room ; all else was gloomy, tarnished, faded. Gloom—surely over all the house was gloom ; surely the wind beating on the windows, moaning and sighing, was burdened with a tale of sins ; surely a sense of evil brooded in this room,—where sat old Edward Craike to think of life drawing near to death,—to think, maybe, of punishment for years of sinning. For on the face was scored a record of old sins and dead passions ; its aspect was evil ; the lips were merciless ; the brooding eyes, from the sudden blazing wrath at Thrale, could burn with an unholy fire. Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood,—I could feel for this old broken man no pity, no affection. I found myself conjecturing only that these eyes would face death—surely so near him—courageously, as an intrepid voyager's looking on uncharted seas.

Thrale, stepping noiselessly, withdrew.

Mr. Bradbury leaned forward swiftly. “ Now, sir,” he said, “ I ask you to listen to me patiently.”

“ Go on, Bradbury ! ”

“ I ask you to remember your affection for your son Richard—such affection as you have not felt for any other being.”

He said heavily, “ Why recall the past,

Bradbury ? What is the past but a voyage I have made, and come from with an empty hold ? ”

“ Ay, surely,” assented Mr. Bradbury, taking snuff and smiling. “ You have a gift of melancholy, Mr. Craike.”

“ Bradbury, you speak to me as no man dares to speak.”

“ You permit me,” said Mr. Bradbury quietly, “ to speak frankly to you, knowing me your friend, Mr. Craike, and honest in my dealings with you. As your friend—as your son’s friend—I am here. Mr. Craike, you’ve sailed over the world in your day ; you’ve suffered shipwreck ; you’ve been cast away. What would you not have given—even you—to have had with you upon the desert isle you’ve told me of, one of your kind—one of your blood ? ”

“ Allegory, Bradbury ? ” he said, impassively.

“ Allegory, surely ! Seeing you sitting here alone—knowing you all these days alone, as surely as were you on your desert isle, longing—as any human being must long—for kith and kin, for friend, at least for one of whose companionship—affection even—you might be assured.”

“ You mean this lad here ? ” in unaltered tone.

“ Who else ? Look at this lad ! Frame a

picture in your mind, Mr. Craike—your son Richard's—set Richard's likeness and this boy's side by side. And will you say that this lad seated here is not, feature for feature, colour of eyes and hair and skin, in body, manner—your son, Richard ? ”

My grandfather said slowly, “ Richard was as all our race. The lad is Richard look for look. What is it to me, Bradbury ? My son was never wed.”

I felt my cheeks burn ; ere Mr. Bradbury might restrain me, I started up, and facing the old man, cried out, “ And there you lie ! If I be the son of Richard Craike—and that I be I care not—no man shall question or deny my parents' honour, take their name lightly. You hear me,—you lie ! ”

He did not stir in his chair ; his aspect was unchanged save that the light seemed to burn up in his old eyes. He said coolly, “ The lad is Richard's son, Bradbury.”

“ And rightly resentful of your words, sir,” cried Mr. Bradbury, snapping his snuff-box.

“ Bradbury, don't try me too far. You are at liberty to go at once—with Richard's son.”

“ Mr. Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, leaning forward in his chair, and looking intently at my grandfather, “ knowing you—your sense of

justice—I dare to tell you, as the lad has told you, that you lie. Your son was wedded nineteen years back to Mary Howe—you will recall her.”

“Surely—serving-woman to Mrs. Charles.”

“He was wedded to her in London, after Charles and his wife, understanding Richard’s passion for her, had driven her from this house. Their enmity pursued her—from house to house, employment to employment. She was in London—destitute, nigh starving—when Richard, returning from the Continent, sought and found her. He married her in London—nineteen years since, Mr. Craike, nineteen years since. He lived for several years with her in London under her name of Howe, earning his living honestly, not communicating with you and taking nothing from you. He disappeared ten years or so back. Mr. Craike, the agency that robbed you of your son; that took him from his wife and child, that shipped him out of England or hid his body in the ground—for whether he be alive or dead I cannot tell, even as you—I do believe to be the active enmity of your son Charles—his jealousy of Richard Craike, his elder brother and your heir.”

And now at last I saw the cruel lips part; and now I heard the old man gasp and mutter to himself; I saw the red flash upon his shaking

hands ; I saw his eyes burn up, and flame from Bradbury to me.

“ Mr. Craike,” Mr. Bradbury proceeded, “ the proofs of this marriage—of the boy’s legitimacy—are in my hands.”

“ You have these proofs with you ? ”

“ Mr. Craike, would I be such a fool as to bring them here ? Would Mrs. Richard Craike entrust them to me, coming to this house ? We have them and we hold them.”

“ Fearing me ? ”

“ No ! Fearing your son Charles. With cause, sir, with bitter cause ! And hear this, sir, we should have been here days since—would have been—but for your son. His agents waylay our coach ; his agents carry off the boy and gaol him in the Stone House you may know of. Ay, and would have shipped him overseas with Blunt—smuggler, freebooter—what is he ? All this, all this,—to keep the lad from you, sir, while you sit by your fire alone—alone ! ”

“ You’ve proof of this ? I have no knowledge of any plot ? ”

“ Proof ! Am I fool or trickster, Mr. Craike ? ”

“ I do not think you fool or trickster, Bradbury.”

“ Look on this boy : his likeness to your son Richard. Knowing your son Charles, think at

what he would stay to keep him from your sight."

He said deliberately, "I know my son Charles even as I know myself. I am no censor, Bradbury. Charles would have kept this lad away from me, say you? Fearing lest he commend himself to me and profit by it; take more at my death than by the law he must inherit. Money and jewels—knowing on what I have my hand. What of it, Bradbury? Had I been Charles; had I desired to keep my brother's son out of my father's sight—for such a reason—I would have done as Charles has done. Only, I was bolder in my day than Charles. Enough, what is all this to me?"

"Yet Charles has failed," said Mr. Bradbury, grinning, "and you will profit by it, Mr. Craike. Do you love Charles?"

"You need not ask that, Bradbury."

"And you loved Richard. You should favour Richard's son. Alone—I said of you—alone, with thoughts—and terrors."

"Had the sea ever terror for me, Bradbury, or peril, or the dark? What terrors now?"

"Mr. Craike, you are a man, and the unknown after death is terrible to men. Except they have a faith that you have not. Unhappily!"

"I have no faith, or fear."

“ Oh, if you be prepared to sit alone in your last years,—face death alone,” Mr. Bradbury said earnestly, “ I appeal still to what was human in you—love for your son Richard. Let your heart turn to Richard’s son.”

“ What purpose would you serve ? ”

Mr. Bradbury did not answer, but was taking snuff, and coldly regarding my Uncle Charles, who had drawn aside the curtain, and was standing in the doorway.

HE stepped forward—a handsome, smiling gentleman of middle age, his face ivory-white, his white hair held by a black ribbon, his dress as precise as Mr. Bradbury's, but set off by his shapely body. He wore no jewel ; he had no touch of colour on him, save the red line of his lips and the cold blue of his eyes. He bowed with a courtly grace to Mr. Bradbury ; he vouchsafed me the merest lift of his brows.

Mr. Bradbury met him with an equal composure. "It's as well that you came here, Mr. Charles," he said. "You formed the subject of our conversation."

"Indeed," he answered, indifferently, and, pulling forward a chair, he seated himself beside his father. "I am happy to believe, sir, that you're prepared to speak of me as freely in my presence as in my absence."

"I am to take this as your permission, Charles ?" asked Mr. Bradbury, smoothly.

"Why not ?" my uncle asked, smiling.

"Well, then, I have introduced this young

gentleman to your father as your brother's son, John Craike. I have already informed your father of the steps you took to prevent his arrival at Craike House."

"My sole concern," said the gentleman, carelessly, "is that I failed."

"You admit your culpability?" asked Mr. Bradbury, meeting him with an equal composure.

"Culpability! Pray, your snuff-box, Bradbury—I haven't mine by me. Thank you!"—leaning forward and taking a pinch. "I admit no culpability, my dear Bradbury."

"It is, to be sure, merely a question of phrase," Mr. Bradbury conceded, drily. "It is enough for me that you failed. Admitting this, then, do you admit equally your responsibility for your brother's disappearance from England?"

I saw my grandfather lean forward in his chair, his hands now gripping the ebony stick; the movement was not lost upon my uncle.

He answered swiftly, "That, Bradbury, I deny wholly. You are well aware of my affection for my brother, and my natural grief at his disappearance."

"Well aware," said Mr. Bradbury, with some show of anger. "And well aware, Charles, that if you were responsible, you would not dare to

admit this before your father, knowing his actual affection for your brother as for no other being. Yet you admit before him your culpability—your guilt—in regard to this young gentleman—your brother's son. Understanding that Mr. Edward Craike here takes a—shall I say tolerant?—view of many things that others,—I,—that the law of England regard as crimes, Charles Craike—as crimes punishable with the utmost rigour.”

“Really, Bradbury, you grow prosy,” Mr. Charles protested.

“You impose upon our friendship, Bradbury,” the old man muttered.

“Mr. Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, “would you have me make-believe to you of all men? Your son attempts to put away his brother's son. He admits his guilt coolly—with effrontery, and you say nothing! I expected you to say nothing. But by his denial of his responsibility for the disappearance of Richard Craike from England, Charles here proves this to me—his realisation of your love for his brother, and the certainty of your righteous anger and his punishment, if it could be proved against him.”

“Bradbury! Bradbury!” Charles Craike murmured, smiling; but for the first time I saw a show of colour in his face, and a tightening of his lips.

“The lad,” persisted Mr. Bradbury, “is Richard’s son. Legitimate ! Be silent, Charles ”—as the gentleman, with a bitter exclamation, started from his chair. “Don’t think that I, of all men, would come here, present this lad to Mr. Craike as his grandson, unless I were in possession of irrefutable proofs—that Richard Craike was married to Mary Howe, and that the boy is the child of that marriage. Nor would I have brought him to this house, but that I realise, as fully as I understand aught of Mr. Craike—that the best of Mr. Craike—his natural affection—was given wholly to his elder son.”

Mr. Bradbury leaned forward, eyeing the pair keenly. Charles Craike, impassive now, sat back in his chair ; the old man had lowered his eyes, and now it seemed at last was moved and trembling ; the ebony stick in his grasp clattered upon the hearth.

“I hoped,” said Mr. Bradbury, “to offer my client a little happiness in his last days. If I could not give him back his son, at least I could give him his grandson—look for look, colour for colour—the image of his son.”

Now my grandfather’s eyes burned suddenly upon me ; now he leaned forward in his chair ; colouring and confused, I sat staring at him in turn. He muttered then, “Bradbury—these proofs !”

“The proofs are in our possession, sir. Necessarily, I could not bring them to this house.”

“Ay, but proofs, proofs—your bare word.”

“Mr. Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, disdainfully, “when have you ever had occasion before to question my probity?”

My grandfather was silent; again his eyes were cast down; the ebony stick in his grasp did not cease to clatter on the hearth. Charles Craike sat silent. Mr. Bradbury, snapping his snuff-box, rose from his chair.

“That is all I have to say to you, Mr. Craike,” he said, quietly. “I beg you to give this matter your earnest consideration, realising that at least the boy is the heir of Craike House, and realising that it is in your power to enrich him from your private fortunes as surely, sir, you would have enriched your son.”

I wondered at the composure of my Uncle Charles. He had risen with Mr. Bradbury, and now stood leaning against the chimney-piece, his face revealing nothing of the rage which surely racked him.

“I beg to take my leave of you, Mr. Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, bowing to my grandfather. “Come, lad!”

But as I started up, glad enough to be away,

the old man's cane smote heavily upon the hearth. "The lad," he growled, "stays here, Bradbury!"

"Mr. Craike, were you alone in this house," said Mr. Bradbury, swiftly, "nothing could give me keener pleasure than that your grandson should remain with you. But Craike House is Craike House, and the lad goes with me."

"He stays here!" cried the old man, with sudden stormy anger. "Damn you, Bradbury, he stays here!"

"Mr. Craike, I am answerable for the lad's safety."

"Really, Bradbury, really!" Charles deprecated.

"The lad will come to no hurt in this house," the old man said, and his eyes blazed suddenly at Charles. "You hear me, Charles? No hurt shall come to him! If hurt come to him,—if, in defiance of me you seek to injure him, and separate my son's son from me, as they took my son from me,—look to it, Bradbury, that no concern for me, and no desire further to keep the secrets of this house, shall stand between my grandson's enemies and justice! Justice, Bradbury! The boy stays here. You remain to dine with me, Bradbury. There are affairs."

Smiling triumphantly, Mr. Bradbury bowed.

“I am honoured, Mr. Craike,” he said; and with a flourish, offered his snuff-box to my Uncle Charles, who accepted a pinch, maintaining an ineffable composure.



AN hour thence I sat in the room which was to be mine while I remained in Craike House, and to which the shadowy Thrale had conducted me. It was a great bed-chamber, its windows overlooking dark woods and hills, and afar through the dropping dusk the leaden greyness of the sea. On entering, I had hastened to throw wide the casement, regardless of the coldness of the wind, but seeking by its freshness to dispel the thick, dead mustiness of the room. A gloomy chamber—the fire smoking on the hearth, the furniture of old dark oak, a great four-poster hung with sombre green silk, presses like tombs, the mirrors, so dull with damp, neglect and age, as scarcely to reflect the pale gleam of the candles, which I had lit against the approaching darkness.

One painting only hung within the room, above the black marble chimney-piece. It might have been a portrait of my Uncle Charles, yet if the painter had depicted faithfully the manner of the man, this cavalier wore no such mask as my uncle affected ; the face was boldly evil. The sinister

gaze seemed to follow me from hearth to window-seat, the head to bend forward from the rich lace collar; the jewelled hands of this cavalier in green and silver to touch the sword in menace. A hateful portrait,—yet I had less dislike of it than of my uncle's aspect; the portrait might well have revealed the soul of Charles Craike, hid in him by his smiling and composed demeanour, his distinction of person, mode and manner, even as the beauty of the body conceals the skeleton. The ceiling of my room, painted after the manner of my grandfather's room, suggested by its riot of bodies, gold gleam of wine cups and brocades, the taste of a dead kinsman; mayhap, the cavalier over the chimney-piece had had the decoration of Craike House. Like the hangings of the bed, the tapestries upon the wall—recording the devoutness of some kinswoman by depicting the quest of the Sangreal—were riddled with moth and dull with dust. Over all the room, as over the house and the wood about it, a cloud seemed to brood; still, in the whipping of the ivy against the panes, the whistling of the wind, and the stir of the hangings, I seemed to hear the whispering voices; the gloom prevailed over the pale candlelight or the spurts of flame upon the smoking hearth. “The doomed house—the doomed house”—I repeated my mother's

words. I found resemblance between the house of Craike and my grandfather,—in the decay upon them both, the storms scored on the front of man and house ; the breaking frames concealing secret sins, the end approaching. The doomed house—so from my first knowledge of it I thought of my kinsmen's home amid the darkling wood.

And here was I to remain after Mr. Bradbury's departure from the house that night. I had the assurance of my grandfather's protection, against my uncle, who hated me, as he had hated my father. What was this treasure old Edward Craike had amassed that for it—surely for it—Charles should have sold his soul ? Now, for the fear of losing this treasure, compelled by the threatening of an old and breaking man to hold his hand from me—his rival ; the irony of it brought a bitter smile to my lips. I had no definite terror yet of the house and its folk ; terror I might have on the moors, terror in the Stone House—to be done to death in my sleep, or terror in the hands of Blunt—shipped aboard his brig, for, it might be, the port of death ; but here I was no more afraid of the event than a man may be afraid of life's adventure. I understood easily that the will of one man—though this man near to dying—held in thrall the folk of Rogues'

Haven ; that this will decree that I should dwell securely in the house ; I believed my uncle, for all his jealous hate of me, would not dare lift his hand further to do me hurt. The mystery of the house, even as the mystery of life to be, allured me ; I was glad to be in the Rogues' Haven, and in the company of its folk, even as I was glad to be alive.

As yet my grandfather had not addressed me directly. The fluttering ghost, Thrale, ere leaving me in my room, had said no more than that a bell would summon me to dinner ; that he would then have the room properly prepared for me ; and that a groom would bring my baggage over from the inn that night. I had laved my face and hands, and smoothed my hair ; this was all the toilet I might make for dinner, and I was resting in a chair by the hearth when there came a knocking on my door. At my call "Come in !" my uncle entered. He stood an instant in the doorway ; from my subsequent knowledge of him he had a just appreciation of the advantages of his appearance,—a superb figure of a man, even as in the niceties and preciseness of his dress and his courtly manners he bore the semblance of a gentleman. He had made a change of his dress ; he wore still sober black, which he affected ever ; but his coat and

breeches were cut very elegantly ; his linen was of a silver whiteness, and illumined by a fine diamond in his cravat ; the snuff-box in his delicate fingers was set with brilliants. He made me a little bow and smiled upon me.

“ Pray be seated, nephew,” he said, as I rose from my chair. “ I trust that I do not intrude on your repose.”

I sought to match my manners with his own, but failed lamentably ; bowing with an ill grace, drawing a chair forward for him with a clatter, and feeling myself colour to the tips of my ears, I said, “ I’m not so weary for the want of rest these past few nights, sir, that I’d be sleeping now. Pray sit down ! ”

He sat down, lolling back in his chair, and crossing his shapely legs. “ Surely between kinsmen,” he said, smiling, “ frankness is natural. Your meaning is patent. Having had so little sleep through my detention of you at the Stone House, you’re weary, and would rest alone. My dear nephew, selfishness has always been my failing—indeed, it is a failing of our family. Forgive me, then, if I trespass, having a word or two to say to you. Will you hear me ? ”

“ Surely.”

He said deliberately, “ For aught that I have done to keep you from this house ; for aught

that I have said concerning you, your parentage and birth, I offer no excuse and ask no pardon. I am no hypocrite at least, my nephew. Indeed, I did believe, when I read Bradbury's letter to my father, that though our blood might run in you, you could have no legitimate claim upon us. I do not question Mr. Bradbury's assurance now"—with a hasty wave of his hand, as if to pacify my swift resentment. "You took affront—natural affront—at words of mine you overheard in the Stone House; accepting Mr. Bradbury's assurance, I own myself mistaken. I tell you, nephew, believing as I then believed, I still would do what I have done to keep you from my father, and to prevent any marks of favour he may show you. Am I frank with you?"

"You'd have me believe so," I muttered, vengefully.

He laughed, and made me a bow. "Nephew," he said, "you're here; you've caught the fancy of your grandfather; how long you'll retain it I'll not conjecture, knowing so little of you. He'll have no hurt come to you at my hands; it is my habit to obey him,"—with a bitter sneer.

"Fearing him?" I ventured.

"As much as I fear any man," he answered, carelessly. "It's to my advantage to be dutiful; it is to the advantage of any man to be dutiful

to a rich kinsman, as of the place-hunter to fawn upon a personage with star or ribbon. Tush, nephew, my practice is the practice of all wise men : to accept the fact, and shape myself to the fact, to seek advantage, and employ what wit I have for the attainment of it. I'm not prepared to love you, nephew ; there is no need for that hypocrisy."

"None !" I assented bitterly.

"But while my father lives," he proceeded, "we're to be inmates of this house. We're to meet daily ; to live our lives together ; to appear in public together. It would be tedious to me that we should be for ever wrangling. Let us then be frank with each other,—hate each other, but let us not show our lack of breeding by impoliteness. John, while we're together in this house, I am prepared to play dutiful kinsman, preceptor, friend. And you ?"

For my very hate of him I could only seek to match my wit with his own. I answered, "And I, my dear uncle, am prepared to ape the part of dutiful nephew—to assume all the respect, affection, trust, I do not feel for you."

He laughed ; he rose from his chair. "We understand one another, nephew. I compliment you upon your breeding. Let us join the gentlemen."

He took my arm with a gay show of cordiality ; arm in arm we went down to dinner, as the bell was clanging through the house.

THE dining-room was gloomy as a vault. The candles, burning in branching silver sticks on the white cloth, might have been tapers burning for the dead. A tapestry of flickering lights and shadows seemed to drape the room ; ever and anon the leaping firelight or the waving candle-flame would be reflected from some piece of plate, or crystal, or gilded frame. I saw the colour show like blood from one great canvas. In the dimness, the servants moving to and fro in final preparation for the meal, seemed ghostly figures. I wondered that all should be old men, till I recollected Mr. Bradbury's explanation to me of the name of Rogues' Haven,—the fact that my grandfather retained about himself his associates and servitors in the making of his fortunes.

I found my grandfather seated in a chair by the fire, and engaged in conversation with Mr. Bradbury. Mr. Craike had put off his gown for an old-fashioned coat of black, gold-braided and gold-buttoned, and a flapped waistcoat of

black silk, flowered with gold; the red jewels glittered still upon his hands, and a brooch of red stones secured the fine laces at his throat. He presented a singular, almost barbaric figure in contrast to the precision of my uncle and Mr. Bradbury.

Waiving formality, all the company at dinner was assembled in the dining-room; two young folk were seated a little apart,—a girl of about my own years and a youth perhaps a year older—him I knew, by his dark likeness to my uncle, for his son Oliver, whom Mr. Bradbury had already mentioned to me; but he had not spoken to me of the girl. My uncle, leading me forward, presented me to her; I scarcely caught his words for my confusion, as I bowed awkwardly to her curtsy; but I gathered that she was his ward, Miss Milne; and I recollected that Milne was his wife's name. I remember that I was repelled by my impression of a dark, sullen face; her black hair fell in ringlets about thin white shoulders, her lips were pale, her grey eyes seemed sunken. Her grey gown became her ill, and she wore no ornament.

My attention was claimed instantly by my uncle—"My dear John,—your cousin Oliver"—blandly making us known, yet his tone suggesting to me disfavour, if not actual dislike, for the

ungainly figure of his son. Ungainly, yet built strongly, wholly lacking his father's elegance,—his hair coarse and black, his brows black, his look sullen and lowering—Oliver Craike yet pleased me more than any of my kinsmen to whom I had been made known. I understood the sturdy strength of him for the rippling muscles displayed by the fine cut of his black clothes; his hand gripped mine with a force that was not hostile; his eyes looked as sullenly at me as Miss Milne's. "You're welcome, cousin," he muttered, while my uncle smiled on us urbanely, and expressed a polite wish that as kinsmen we might be friends.

But Mr. Bradbury claimed my immediate attention; with a word of apology to my grandfather, he rose from his chair, and drew me apart from them.

"I'll be penning a letter to Chelton," he said. "Have you any commission with which you care to entrust me? My letter to your mother at least will be delivered."

"No more than a message to her," I answered, with a sudden longing for the peace and happiness of Chelton and my mother's cottage, and for the companionship of Tony Vining. "That I'm all eagerness to return to her. That I'll not long remain here."

"I shall assure her," he said, smiling at me,

“that you’re safe with your grandfather, and that you’ve commended yourself to his favour, and are happy.”

“You interpret me too freely, Mr. Bradbury,” I said.

“Nay, now,” he protested, smiling. “I’m anxious only to convey to your good mother a message that may allay her fears, and set her mind at rest.” Lowering his tone, that only I might hear him, he added, “You’re safe here, lad. Your grandfather’s will is law. I assure you that you have won his favour by your looks and speech,—your resemblance to your father. You will be safe ; a year or so, a few months—nay, days, maybe—and you’ll be rich and free to live your life where and how you will. And I’ll be accurately informed of your condition here ; I’ll be at hand.”

He broke off, observing that from the hearth my grandfather and my uncle watched us closely. And at the moment Thrale stepped forward to announce that dinner was served ; my uncle gave my grandfather his arm to assist him to his chair at the head of the table. The old man presided, with Mr. Bradbury on his right and my uncle on his left ; I sat with the girl beside me, my cousin Oliver frowned darkly at us from across the board.

Mr. Bradbury had prepared me for my grandfather's wealth—the neglect and disorder of house and grounds might have served to negative this ; I wondered yet at the magnificence of the silver upon the table and at the luxury of the meal. I wondered at the richness, and the fantastic design and chasing of this massy plate, at the curious goblets of crystal, as at the rare wines and meats and fruits. But I was amazed and more concerned at my grandfather's servants—old men, old rogues—I looked on wrinkled faces, brown as with the burning of tropic suns and the lashing of tropical seas ; brown hands offered me dishes and filled my glass ; a sleeve slipping back from a bony wrist showed me dull blue tattoo marks ; glancing over my shoulder I saw an evil brown face, and believed that the old man leered at me. All the while the girl beside me uttered not a word ; Oliver devoted himself to his dinner ; and my grandfather conversed in low tones with Mr. Bradbury. Not till the girl had left us silently, and the cloth was drawn, and we sat over our wine, did aught come to break the silence about me. My cousin, I saw, was drinking deeply ; his face was flushed with wine ; once, as he looked up suddenly, and our eyes met, he scowled blackly at me. My uncle was sitting watching his son, his look

expressive of contempt ; now, as if to divert my attention from Oliver's intoxication, he leaned forward, and with a tolerable show of cordiality, bade me draw in my chair, and take wine with him.

But my grandfather broke in, " I've a toast, Bradbury—a toast, Charles," and rose unsteadily, and lifted his glass in a shaking hand. Mr. Bradbury raised his glass, my uncle watched the old man, smiling ; Oliver was muttering thickly to himself ; I saw the old brown men watching from the shadows.

" A toast,—I'll drink few more, Bradbury—I'll drink few more. I'll give ye the fortunes of our family—Charles, and the rest of ye. I'll drink to my son Dick's home-coming—hey, Charles—hey, Bradbury ? Or, if he's dead, I'll have ye drink to my heir—whosoever he may be ! "

He laughed harshly, and drank his wine. The stem of the crystal snapped suddenly in my uncle's fingers ; the wine ran blood-red from his white hand. Oliver burst into a roar of drunken laughter.

MR. BRADBURY took his leave shortly after dinner, driving off in his coach, attended by the Bow Street runners. He was allowed no further opportunity of speech with me, my uncle engaging him in conversation ; my grandfather sitting grim and silent by the fire. From time to time, I found his eyes studying me, as I sat glumly apart ; his face was expressionless of his sentiment to me. My cousin Oliver had been aided from the room by Thrale on my uncle's direction. On Mr. Bradbury's departure, the old man went to his room, leaning on his son ; and I was left alone by the fire.

The fire was burning down into coals ; the candles flickered on the chimney-piece ; the reflections flitted like white moths over the mirrors ; else the room was draped with shadows. All about me I heard furtive sounds ; out of the gloom I believed that the bleared eyes of the old rogues who served my grandfather surveyed me secretly,—this may have been no more than a phantasm of my mind, yet I could have sworn

that, when the coals fell, and the red flame splashed into the well of darkness about me, I saw those wrinkled brown faces—surely burnt by the suns of the Spanish Main or the Indies. Rogues' Haven ! I was realising what manner of man was my grandfather ; I was conjecturing that he had sailed across the seas in his heady youth, and grown rich with plunder.

I have a belief—it dates from the time I passed at Rogues' Haven—that the spirit of a man is stamped upon the house in which he dwells. Surely the spirit of old Edward Craike impressed itself upon his gloomy home, and the mystery of the man was the mystery of the house. Ay, the past of our race and the past of my grandfather alike affected the ancient house, meshed in a monstrous web of dark green ivy, clouded by gloomy woods, and blown upon by melancholy winds. Now did faces peer out of the shadows at me, seated drearily by the fire ? Did I hear whispering, muttering, or did I but imagine voices in the wind come up from stormy sea to the black woods, to cry about the dwelling, and moan and sigh, and to creep in by breach and crack and cranny, to stir the dusty, moth-corrupted hangings, and fill the house with secret rustling, sighing ?

My uncle did not rejoin me till the night was far

advanced. He came in stepping so stealthily that at the sudden sight of him standing beside me, and watching me with haunted eyes, I started from my chair, and scarcely repressed a cry. He smiled at me, but his gaiety of the early evening had passed from him; he dropped heavily into a chair facing me, giving me not a word. I watched the shadows fall about his face, as the coals blackened out, and the candles, waving in the draughts, guttered, burned down, and smoked. If a light leaped high from silver stick, I saw him white as ivory, lips twisted, eyes brooding. He looked at me malevolently at times; I understood how much in truth he hated me; how my resemblance to my father tormented him; what was the repression compelled upon him by his father.

He said suddenly, "It's a cruel trick of fate, nephew, brings you to this house!"

"How?" I asked. "I'm not here by any wish of mine."

"Or by any wish of mine," he said, with a bitter laugh. "Fate, in the form of Bradbury! Odd, kinsman, that my father should be so near to death, and I who have endured him all these years bid fair to lose in these last days of his my profit on it. I've a notion, nephew, that in the few weeks you will remain here you'll benefit by

all I looked for. Estimate my sentiment towards you ! ”

“ The hate that looked from your eyes a moment since.”

“ A poor expression of it, nephew,” he said. “ There is no look, or word spoken or written, shall reveal a man’s soul. The fellow Rousseau has essayed to reveal his soul, to be sure, and has revealed but the body of an ape. I have a philosophy of my own, John Craike,—that my soul is not my body’s own ; that aught I do, while my soul is in my body, counts nothing in the score against me. If I do aught—pride myself on it or am ashamed—I need not plume myself, or fret me. For it is not my deed.”

“ A comfortable creed,” said I. “ It would absolve you from aught that you have done or plan to do against your brother or your brother’s son.”

“ I take it so,” he answered, coolly. “ Nephew, this will of mine—I name it ‘ will ’—is no more mine, no more controllable by me than that wind blowing from the sea, and crying out about this dreary house. The actions of our lives are inevitable as storm or summer sun. My very promise to my father to do no hurt to you, while you are in this house, is no more mine than the injury I have essayed and failed to do you. We

are predestined, nephew,—as surely as any hapless wretch who walked the plank, or drowned in scuttled ship, or burned with its burning—at my father's hands."

"I did not know," I whispered, "the manner of his past. And do you tell me?"

"I tell you nothing that you must not know," he said indifferently. "Rogues' Haven—this house—is but a haven for old rogues,—rogues who were young and lusty with him once, and sinned at his command. Sinned! Nay, there is no sin; there is no virtue that is a man's own. Predestined!"—his laughter rang out over the winds that beat against the shutters—"Will you tell all this to my father, nephew? Will you seek to blacken me to him that you may profit by it? It will not change a whit his disposition to me. He is not wholly past all love or hate, though he is near to death. And lacking my philosophy, he is not past all terror. He fears death; he fears dead men who, living, troubled him not at all. He is afraid to go down to their company—their company—the maw of the worm or the fish, the decay of all who go down into the ground or sink in the sea. His soul—it never was his soul! He loved your father; he ever hated me. Till he grew old, his will was stronger than my will. My will grows stronger, nephew;

I warn you my will may yet prevail over his old affection for your father, on which your hope with him rests wholly."

"Will!" I repeated. "It accords ill with your creed, my uncle."

"Will!" he said, laughing. "Oh, it's no more than the force given to the wind or the wave. Predestined! If I win yet, nephew, so it is fated; not any act of yours or mine may stay it. I do not see the event. No man may look beyond the minute that is now. Nephew, I vow I saw you yawning; I prose; I weary you; I am a dull fellow,—and who would not be, living in this house?"

"No, I am tired, that's all. I'll go to bed."

He caught the bell-rope, and old Thrale answering, he bade him light me to my room. The fire upon its hearth burned brightly; the bed was warm and soft, but my comfort lulled in no way my apprehension of the night. Though I locked the door and set a chair against it, I did not feel secure. Knowing myself friendless in the house, with no more than the decaying will of an old man between me and my enemy. Knowing the house peopled with old rogues, who, I conjectured, had been seamen on my grandfather's ship, when he was young, and sinned unpardonable sins, and grew rich under a black flag.

I fell to picturing him in his youth and strength—the dark ruthless face, the powerful body, the strong, cruel hands. I pictured him on the deck of his ship,—I conjured up its build for swiftness, its rakish masts, the swell of its white sails. I conjured up illusions of glittering seas, blue as the sheen on copper in the sun ; a phantasm of those old rogues, withered, bloated, tottering now, as lusty with youth. Stark to the waist I saw them, their bodies muscular and brown as iron, and lithe as steel ; the wicked aged faces that had peered at me out of the shadows now young, and red with drink and lust and greed ; I saw these rogues now toiling at the guns,—through smoke I saw them : their hands grip cutlass, or knife, or pistol now for dish or glass or bottle. I saw such treasure, as the massy plate upon the board that night, piled on red decks with bursting chests of rich apparel—dyed silks and satins, laces ; gold pieces, precious gems, even as the red gems upon my grandfather's fingers. And I heard piteous lamentation in the wind screaming from the sea ; cries of the dying and tormented in its wailing round the house, and in its rumbling above the chimney stacks the roar of guns ; and the wash of waters in the sweeping of the pine and fir boughs. The dark curtains of my bed were half-drawn ; when the

moon shone in, I saw a black flag flying and a death's head on it.

For my terrors, born of the evil brooding in this house, I could not rest. I fell to wondering whether my grandsire slept soundly in his bed, or whether phantoms crowded upon him, and the winds cried menace to him—an old man black with sins and nigh to dying.

I SLEPT towards morning, and did not wake until the sun was rising ; the light came golden-green through the stained windows. I rose from my bed, and, opening the casement, looked out over sunlit woods ; afar, through the break in the trees, I could make out the glittering waters of the sea. In the decaying garden I saw the colours of many flowers among weeds ; a hawthorn by an overgrown walk was a silver fount of blossom. The gloom of the garden and the wood had passed with the darkness and the sea wind ; only the pines and firs were sombre yet and sighing in the breeze.

I was still in my shirt when a rapping sounded on my door. I hastened silently to pull away the chair, asking, " Who's there ? "

My cousin Oliver answered gruffly, " It's I, cousin," and I let him in. He was in shabby riding-rig, his black hair tumbled over his nose ; he stood awkwardly in the doorway. With the flush of drink off him he seemed not so ill a fellow, though his look was lowering and sullen, and he

possessed none of his father's elegance, but only a hard strength such as must have been my grandfather's in his youth. "Get into your breeches, cousin," he muttered, "and ride with me."

"Why, I'll be happy," said I.

"We'll ride down to the sea and swim in it, if you've a mind for it."

"I've a mind for it, yes."

"Dress then. I'll wait for you," and moved over to the window-seat and lounged there, till I had pulled on my clothes. He sat sullenly regarding me; I could not estimate his disposition to me, believing that his father had instructed him to treat me with civility; from time to time I stole a glance at him reflected dully in the mirror, noting the health and strength of him, and could not find it in me to hate the fellow as with cause I hated his father. Dressed at last, a towel about my neck, I said, "At your service, cousin," and he, lurching up from his seat, strode before me down the gallery, and brought me by a dark stair out of the house into the courtyard. I had a certain hesitation in accompanying him—with my escape from being shipped overseas with Blunt on the *Black Wasp* fresh in my mind; but reassured that I was safe now through my grandfather's direction, I set my dread aside.

He had anticipated my hesitation, it seemed, for he swung round, and demanded curtly, "Are you afraid to go with me, cousin?"

"No, I'm not afraid," I answered.

He cast a look about him, shot out his hand and gripped my sleeve. He said, in that harsh tone of his, "You've no need to be, whatever others may do. D'ye understand me?"

"I'm happy to understand."

"You saw me swilling last night."

"Ay, I saw."

He said simply, "Wouldn't the house and the folk in it drive a man to the devil?"—and turned abruptly and crossed the courtyard with me at his heels.

The courtyard was deserted. Neglect and decay marked it; the moss grew green in crevices and cracks of the paving stones; the ivy held the out-buildings as it held the house. The great stables were bare but for three horses in the stalls; a fellow ill of look, of middle-age, but seeming young by comparison with the old men about my grandfather, was plying a broom.

"Saddle the mare for Mr. Craike, Nick," Oliver ordered. "I'll get my horse out."

Nick responding, "Ay, ay, sir," set down his broom, and stared at me. A seaman surely, he was as brown as the old rogues; the silver rings

in his ears, and the tattoo-marks on his bare arms, accorded ill with his shabby rig of a groom.

I waited by the stable-door until Nick brought out the mare ; Oliver followed, leading a powerful black horse ; and making down to the gates, he leaped to saddle. I, rejoicing at the prospect of a better mount than ever it had been my lot to ride, disdained Nick's assistance into saddle, and rode out after Oliver. I had already a hope of friendship with this strong, uncouth, young kinsman of mine. I thought to find him in his disposition no more a pattern of my uncle than he resembled the gentleman in his fashion and graces. Yet I feared to confide in any of the folk of the house, and I resolved to keep my own counsel until I knew more of my cousin. Indeed, he gave me no opportunity for conversation. He made off at a gallop down the drive ; and I had much ado to keep within sight of him. He did not ride for the gates, but swerving off to the left, he rode down through the park to the wall, where it was crumbling and broken. Setting his horse to the breach, he leaped it ; and I following, he led me at a gallop down towards the sea.

The joy of the morn dispelled for a time my thoughts of the gloomy house and its folk. The sun was now clear ; the breeze blew sweetly from the sea ; little white clouds sailed over a blue

heaven. We came out of the wood into open country ; we swept through green meadows and drained lands ; he rode like the very devil, taking hedge and ditch ; he did not pause till we were riding out through a break in the cliffs. The shingly beach of a little cove was before us ; the waters rolling in and the foam scudding. I saw the white gulls wheel and dip ; fishing boats were out at sea ; no dwelling was in sight ; the beach was all our own. Oliver, dismounting, secured his bridle to a stunted tree, and silently walked down with me over the rocks to the beach ; drawing apart from me to strip. I had no proper realisation of his strength till I saw him racing out into the sea—it seemed to me to break with a dangerous wash upon the beach ; he splashed out with the sunlight white upon him, and the waters foaming against him ; he swam far out then and rode back with the breakers. I, being accustomed only to inland waters, was nigh drowned, when I attempted to follow him ; I was no more his match as swimmer than as horseman. I was dressed, and glowing with warmth and health, ere he desisted and pulled on his clothes.

“ Faith, cousin,” said I, “ I would I had your strength and courage. Had I dared swim out as you, I’d have drowned for sure.”

He nodded, not ill-pleased, and said, grinning, "I should have wagered you you'd not dare. If you'd have drowned——" but broke off and turned from me.

"You mean, if I'd have drowned," said I, "it would have been all to the advantage of other folk?"

"What does it matter what I meant? Hark'ee, cousin, while you're in the house, whatever's done to get you out of it, I'm not for profiting by it."

"You mean you're my friend."

"I didn't say so," he answered heavily. "I'm saying that I'm not for profiting at your cost—d'ye understand me?" He did not face me, but stood staring seawards. I said nothing, but waited. He burst out presently, "You've a notion by now how old Edward came by his money. If he have money? If all this talk among the rogues about him be more than the chattering of old fools? They talk of a secret store he keeps by him at the house. They talk, when they fancy none's listening to 'em, of gold and jewels. They vow he's hid his store in the house, and none knows where save himself. From their talk 'twas evilly come by. There's blood upon it—every coin and gew-gaw; there's a curse upon it; they say no man'll ever profit

by it ; and every rogue among them itches to set his claws upon it, curse or no curse." He laughed and waved his hand seawards. " We're an ill race, we Craikes," he muttered. " We've been of the sea and the coasts year in, year out. The sea calls every man of us down to it—you and I'll be sailing yet, cousin ; the sea calls us and the sea has us in the end. Did you hear the beat of the sea like drums through the night, cousin ? Did you hear the wind crying ? "

" Ay, as if the spirits of the dead were in it. Ay, and I feared."

He said slowly, " I've heard it, many a night about the old house. I've heard the voices growing louder. D'ye think old Edward lies awake, and listens and fears ? He's near to death. He's turned eighty years. And all the old rogues about him know him breaking and cease to fear him. He was their captain once by the strength and the will of him. He would have died at their hands but for his strength and will, and never have brought his ship and his treasure home. He's breaking. What's to be the end, cousin ?"—he laughed savagely to himself. " D'ye think me mad, John Craike ? "

" No, having passed a night in the house."

" We're like to see the end, you and I and my

father,—he has wit enough to win. But that fellow Blunt.”

“ A damned rogue ! ”

“ Blunt and his men of the *Black Wasp*, Thrale and old Mistress Barwise, will see to it yet there’s wild doings at the house. She’s housekeeper, to be sure. Blunt was ship’s boy with old Edward. They think a treasure’s hid in the house. What d’ye think of it all ? ”

“ Think ! That I’d have you for my friend, cousin ? ”

“ You’re like to be the heir of all this,” he said, laughing. “ Why should I be your friend ? ”

“ Being what I think you,” I told him ; “ not what you’d have me think. Your hand, cousin.”

He swung round, his brows scowling, his face flushed. He muttered, “ D’ye mean it, John Craike ? After seeing me as I was last night ? You’ll see me so any night of the week. You’ll see me a butt for my father. You’ll find me a cross-grained, ill-mannered fellow.”

“ I think you as you are,” I answered steadily. “ Your hand, cousin.”

MY grandfather summoned me to his presence before noon. I breakfasted with Oliver ; my uncle did not honour us ; it was his habit, his son informed me, to lie abed late. The girl Evelyn Milne came down, slim and pale in her black gown ; she gave us the chilliest of "good mornings," and sat silent and obscure through the meal. Thrale waited on us ; recalling all Oliver had said to me on the beach, I eyed the old man in the light of day—observing the brownness of his shrivelled skin, the bony hands serving us so deftly ; and from time to time I saw him peer at me, his eyes gleam sinister ; his face expressed nothing ; his voice was thin and reedy. The girl passed not a word with us, ere she rose from breakfast ; she seemed a poor, scared, fluttering thing, afraid of Oliver and me.

"How do we pass the day, cousin ?" I asked, as Oliver pulled back his chair. "Do we ride abroad ?"

Thrale interrupted swiftly, "Will you pardon me, sir ?"

“Surely, Thrale.”

“Your grandfather, sir, desires a word with you. He asks you to remain here. He’ll send for you when he’s ready for you.”

I nodded. Oliver, without a word, marched out, leaving me to yawn the morning away by the fire. Thrale, clearing the table, vanished presently; I sat waiting glumly; silence had fallen over the house. The sunlight filtered through the dull panes, revealing the decay of the house, the tattered tapestries, the mouldering oak, the green-specked mirrors and the paintings dark with smoke and grime. I pondered heavily, feeling the gloom descend once more upon me, and hearing stealthy footsteps through the house, and muttering voices. The air of the room was thick with the musty odours of decay; the windows, when I would have opened them, proved bound with ivy. I grew so weary that at last I would have pulled the bell-rope for Thrale, and asked him to bring me a book, or let me out into the air, until my grandfather should summon me. I started to find Thrale was in the room and beckoning to me, “Your grandfather will see you now, sir,” he said.

I followed him readily up the stairs and down the corridor to my grandfather’s room. He announced me with all formality, “Mr. John,

sir," and left me standing before the grim old figure in the brocaded gown. He sat huddled by the fire, his jewelled hands seemed palsied, as he warmed them at the blaze ; his lips scarcely to support his tobacco pipe—the air was heavy with smoke. He pointed to the chair before him ; when I sat down, he regarded me for awhile in silence. He said at last, " Well, grandson—Bradbury swears you're my grandson, and Bradbury has no cause to lie."

" I'm happy that you think so, sir," I flashed, colouring.

He chuckled to himself, " You've Richard's look," he said. " You've his evil temper—I've horsed him for it many a time. Ay, and he's dead— isn't he ? "

" For all I know. Or overseas."

" Or overseas ! " he repeated slowly. " Your mother now—does she know ? "

" My mother thinks him dead."

" She was a fine, upstanding lass," he said, pulling at his pipe. " Ay, ay, years since. And she wedded Richard—he-he—for all that Charles and his wife might do. She feared and hated us all, except Richard. She's paying Charles coin for coin. What's she said of us to you."

" Little, and that'll I'll not say, sir, by your leave."

His brow grew dark ; he muttered, " Years since—not so many—and you'd not have answered so. You're bold—hey, you're bold. Little she said, but no good—hey ? "

" Why should she speak well of you ? " I said, quietly. " You were her enemies."

He chuckled, " Ay, and so she kept you hid from us all these years. You'd not be in the house but for Bradbury. Cunning dog, Bradbury."

" And even for Mr. Bradbury," said I, " I'll not be staying, sir."

" Why ? D'ye fear Charles ? Has Charles done aught—after my word to him ? " He lurched up from his chair and stood glowering down on me ; the tobacco pipe, dropping from his grasp, smashed on the hearth.

" No, he's done nothing."

" Why would you go then ? Are you afraid—our ways not being yours ? Why would you go ? "

I answered, " I do not like the house or the folk around you. What's there about this house, sir ? What's it in the very wind of a night ? What's all the muttering in the dark ? "

He returned to his chair, and leaning forward in it, watched me intently with his red-lidded eyes

" I feared the house," I went on, " when I first

came up through the woods with Mr. Bradbury, and saw it in its cobweb of ivy and the black pines at its back. I've no cause to remain here, and I'll not remain."

He muttered, "Yet you'll remain."

"I'm gaoled here, then. Is that it?"

"You'll remain," he repeated, "though you'll be free to ride abroad with the young cub Oliver. You're safe here; there's naught in the house to fear. There's none dares do you hurt."

"None of those old men, your servants?" said I. "Those old brown men with the evil eyes, and the rings in their ears, and the tattoo-marks on their arms? I'm afraid, maybe, of Blunt and his crew—not of these old men."

"Once," he chuckled. "Ay, but once."

"Once these old rogues were to be feared, you mean?"

"Once, I was feared, as—by God!—I am yet to be feared. I'm master of my house, grandson, as I was master of my ship. Master of Blunt—any who'd do you hurt. You'll stay!"—poking out his shaking hand, the red gems gleaming, "You'll stay, as your father would have stayed by me, till the breath's out of my body. Not so very long!" His tone was quavering and eager, "You'll bear me company, and you'll profit by it. I'll soon be dead, and you'll soon be rich. Would

you have me think you care nothing to be rich ? ”

“ Why, surely we all care.”

“ Ay,” nodding his head. “ I could tell of a treasure a man would sell his soul for ”—lowering his tone, peering about him, and muttering. “ You can come by it honestly, if that’s aught to you, and more than if only you come by it. D’ye see these red rings ? ”

“ Like blood upon your hands,” I ventured, shrinking from him.

He laughed to himself, “ Like blood ! Rubies ! I’ll show you yet—when it’s fitting—and tell you a tale.”

“ Plundered treasure ! ”

“ What of it ? What gives a man the right to the treasure of the earth except the strength to take and hold it ? ”

“ As any of the rogues about this house would take.”

“ Ay, if they dared. And knew where I hold it. Fearing me yet and not knowing. Will ye not stay ? ”

“ And yet I’ll not stay in this house.”

He said heavily, but without anger, “ You’re like your father in more than looks. I’d have you by me, till I die. You fear the dark and the sounds of the wind and sea. You’re young—

what should you hear in the wind, or see moving in the dark? What should you see stepping over the floor, when the moon comes up? I fear nothing in the winds or the dark or the moon. Ay, and I've sailed in uncharted seas, and I'll sail the sea that shall never have a chart. Not fearing! But I'd have you by me, till I embark."

He fell to silence; awhile I sat and watched him. He said then, musing, "I've rotted in this accursed house, since I left the sea. The house with the green ivy webbed about it; I've a sense of being caught in the weed—held to die and rot. There's talk among seamen of waters where the weed's taken many a ship—I'm held so by the weed. Its roots 'll strike into my heart. It battens on dead men."

I knew his mind was decaying with the breaking body. I pitied remembering that he had loved my father. I knew now that, black with guilt, he feared the uncharted sea on which he must soon set sail. And I thought of the old rogues about him watching, waiting, until they feared no longer, and might take what long ago they would have taken, had they dared. Yet I think not pity, not the desire that all men have to be rich, would have prevailed against the terror of the house in the night—the doomed house. I think

that I, being of his blood, was led by the spirit of adventure to stay by him. Adventure, and desire to see the play to its end.

“ I’ll stay here, sir,” I said, “ if you’ll have it so. On a condition—that I be free to go about and abroad as I will.”

“ Ay, so long as you bear me company when I’ve need of you,” he answered, with a show of satisfaction.

MY grandfather, pulling the bell-rope, summoned Thrale, and ordered curtly, "Send Barwise and her man to me!" As Thrale vanished, the old man said to me, "I've orders for 'em, John—orders. She's housekeeper; he's butler, and their son Nick's groom. Rogues all!"

He chuckled, and sought his snuff-box; so he made play with it that I observed it cut from ebony, with a silver skull and bones patterned upon it. He ceased his senile chuckling at the rapping on the door; I saw him grip the arms of his chair and hold his head high, as if to make a show of strength and sanity before Barwise and his wife.

The woman held my attention rather than the man. She had been a fine handsome woman in her day; she bore herself still stiffly erect, though she was very old. A black silken gown hung loosely about her shrunken body; keys in a little basket on her arm rattled like fetters. She had a high, white mob-cap on her thick, iron-grey hair; the skin was drawn and withered about the

bones of her face ; her mouth was firm yet, and her eyes clear and black,—of all the rogues who served my grandfather, I came to like none so ill as the Barwise woman. Her husband was a fat, bald, old rogue, clad in shabby black, his paunch protruding ; rolls of fat beneath his chin ; his hands were fat and oily. His sunburn was ripened to the rich glow of wine ; his little eyes were bloodshot. The woman made a curtsy ; the clash of her keys startled me with a notion that all her bones were rattling. Barwise bowed.

My grandfather addressed the woman with the strong and measured utterance he had employed to Mr. Bradbury. “ I’ve sent for you, Barwise, and your man there,” he said, “ as I’d have you know that this young gentleman, my grandson, is to be obeyed.”

She curtsied once more ; for an instant her eyes rested balefully on me.

“ I’d have you so instruct your folk,” my grandfather proceeded. “ While he’s in my house, you’ll all treat him as your master—d’ye understand me ? ”

She nodded, staring at him curiously as if remarking a strength become strange to her.

“ He’s likely to be master after me, d’ye hear ? ” my grandfather added. “ You take your orders

now from me ; whatever orders he chooses to give, you take them as from me."

The woman croaked, "It's well for you, Mr. Craike, to have the young gentleman by you. I mark a change in you already."

Her bold eyes warred with his ; as understanding her meaning that she knew him near to decay and that this assumed strength was no more than the flash of a dying fire, he roared out, "I want no words from you, mistress ! You're old ; you're presuming on your service. Mark me, I'll be obeyed !" and started to his feet, and rapped his cane upon the floor with such bullying wrath and strength that she quailed before him and shrank back, her husband staring at him and quivering like a jelly.

She muttered, "I meant nothing !"

"Ay, meant nothing ! Time was——" but he broke off, hesitated, at last cried out, "Ay, and the time is yet. I'll be obeyed. You've thought me old, Barwise—you and the lazy crew I support here of my bounty. Take care I don't make a sweep of ye all—of ye all—d'ye mark me ?" Mastering himself then and dropping heavily back in his chair, "That's all, Barwise. You'll obey Mr. John Craike—all of ye !"

Propping his chin upon his cane, he sat glaring at them, till, with a venomous look at me,

the woman whisked from the room, her husband shuffling after. So he sat stiffly till the door was shut ; then lay back in his chair and fell again to senile chuckling. " Eh, John, but they think me near to dying," he said. " Eh, John, did ye mark how I took the wind from her sails ? Eh, but I'm stronger for having Richard's son beside me. I thought to die captain of my ship many a time. And I think to die master of my own house," and so, sat chuckling and shaking, his strength leaving him as suddenly as his will had summoned it. He rambled on, " She's an ill fowl—eh, John ? She's a skeleton held together by her skin—no more. Barwise's woman,—she'd looks once,—hair black as the storm and eyes as black. She'd wear silks and gold rings. She took a fat picking from my men, when I sailed my ship. She'd a tavern Shadwell way." He broke off, and looked dully at me. He muttered, " Can you not see, lad, the manner of man I was ? Can you not see the wreck I am ? How I ruled 'em once and how now that they think me broken—they'd mutiny, they'd rob me ; they'd have what they'll never set their fingers on ? "

" Surely my uncle would discipline them at a word from you. Clear the house of them."

" Ay, ay, Charles ! Charles watches me, as they, and thinks to rob me ! " He gasped, and

huddled in his chair; ghastly now, and the sweat beading his brow.

I said swiftly, "Shall I ring for Thrale? You're ill, sir!"

He croaked, "And let 'em see me so!"—and clawed in his pocket and poked a slim key into my hands, and whispered, "Hey! The press there—the bottle—pour me a dram!"

I unlocked the press beside him, and taking out a bloated green bottle—much as the bottle at Mother Mag's—poured some spirit into a glass; and his hands now shaking, so that he must have spilt the drink, I held it to his lips, until he swallowed it down, choking and coughing. Whatever the stuff, it lent him speedy strength and colour. He sat blinking at me with those evil old eyes of his. I could feel scant pity for him, save for the thought that he had been so strong, and was now old and weak, and that the rogues who had formed his crew, and whom for some odd fancy, or fear, he had kept about him would now tear him down, as they would have torn him down, had he been less strong and ruthless, on his ship.

I said, "You've a pretty crew of rogues about you, sir. Give me but the word, and I'll drive off and have Mr. Bradbury back here, and we'll make a sweep of the whole company."

He answered, "No. Rogues, but they serve me well. And I ruled 'em once. And I'll rule 'em till I'm dead. You'll stay by me, John—ay, ay, and you'll profit by it, and Charles shall pay for his sins. Now you may leave me, lad. They'll obey you. They'll fear you, fearing me still. There are many books in the old house. There's a horse in the stable. There's the wench, Milne; and there's the whelp, Oliver, who'll ride with you, and drink with you, and rook you. Ay, and there's guineas for the spending"—clawing suddenly into the pocket of his gown, and drawing out a purse and slinging it to me. It rang with gold, as I caught it in my hand.

NOW I was not fated long to test the efficacy of my grandfather's control over his son and his servants. I'd have you know that twelve folk served my grandfather at Craike House, and that excepting Nick Barwise, the groom, these rogues were of the crew who served under Mr. Craike when he sailed his own ship, and that in his fantastic spirit he would have them by him after his return to England to assume his position as Craike of Craike House. The gates were kept by Isaac, second son of the Barwise union, and his woman, the swart gipsy, whom I had observed on my arrival with Mr. Bradbury. All this disreputable company, as much as my grandfather's eccentricities, had won the house its ill-name—Rogues' Haven, among the folk of the countryside ; these rogues, too, were leagued with smugglers such as Blunt, who plied their traffic under the very nose of the justice Gavin Masters, and the coastguards.

My uncle, since his father's advanced years and decay pointed to his speedy death, had torn

himself away from the diversions of London and society, of which he was adjudged an ornament. Penniless, while he played devoted son, he had established an advantageous understanding with Blunt and his folk, who would alternate long voyages to America and the Indies, on Lord knows what nefarious traffic, with running smuggled stuff from the Continent to the English coast. That my uncle fretted under the yoke of duty manifested itself daily in his covert sneers at his father; the chagrin of Charles, my grandfather remarked to me, had lent a zest to living.

The days I spent in Craike House passed dully and without noteworthy event. I did not lose my dread of the house in the night; the impressions of my first night under its roof abated in no way, but the good-humour of my uncle, the servility of Thrale and his fellow-rogues, the companionship of Oliver, and the sports which I shared with him, lent me a confidence which was to prove groundless. I passed much of my time in playing chess with my grandfather, in reading to him from old voyagers and romancers—of whose works he had by him a great store, or in listening to his narrative of his own sailings, which, if incomplete, gave me a portrait of him by no means calculated to advance my affection for him. Yet that I

advanced daily in his favour was patent ; my uncle masked his chagrin under a bland demeanour, and a display of the graces and accomplishments which surely rendered his absence deplored by society. But though my grandfather assured me of protection, and though my uncle professed a truce, I would have been wise to follow my first inclination—not to remain under the roof of Craike House,—as I shall now relate.

One morn, a month, I should say, from my coming to Rogues' Haven, my grandfather informing me, through Thrale, that I was free to pass the day as I pleased, I bade Thrale unlock the door for me, and passed out of the house. The gold sunlight lay upon the garden ; if it dispelled for a time the gloom, it emphasised the disrepair of the old house,—the ivy climbing to the chimney stacks and lacing the windows ; a few it had obscured wholly. As I looked up, I saw the sinister face of Mrs. Barwise looking from a high window ; she bobbed back instantly. I estimated the covert hostility of the rogues of Craike House ; and, having a certain apprehension of walking abroad unarmed, I took out my knife and speedily fashioned me a heavy cudgel. I went down then by a flight of stone steps into the old sunken garden to the right from

the house,—steps crumbling and green with moss, and overshadowed by a tangle of roses and honeysuckle, descending into a cool depth which had been laid out once in ornate flower beds and lawns, but was now overrun with fox-gloves, prevailing through their sturdy strength over other flowers. Yet the air was sweet with the white-starred jasmine over the crumbling walls, shutting the deep garden from the old plantation, which had become a dense wood.

Once paths had curved to the sundial at the heart of the garden. The dial was broken and corroded now ; a bramble had caught it in its claws ; sparrows fought and chirruped upon it in the sun. Arbours had become thickets ; through the broken wall I saw the wood go deep, but the sunlight struck through the trees upon a path among tall grasses and flowers spilled from the garden.

I climbed the broken wall and sauntered down the woodland path, taking delight in beauty, and presently departing from the track, passed down to left into a deep glade—silver and green in the sunlight ; the dew was not yet dry on fern and grass. And suddenly I saw the girl Evelyn Milne,—she sat upon a fallen log, moss-grown and bramble-clustered. Her head was bare ; her bonnet lying on the turf beside her ; she sat bent

with her hands clasped at her knees—a picture of melancholy and loneliness ; yet the sun found the glossy sheen in her dark hair, and the whiteness of her neck and hands. At the crack of a stick under my feet, she started up, and stood regarding me with sullen eyes. I swept off my hat, but she offered me no greeting.

I stammered, “ I ask your pardon, Miss Milne. I did not think to disturb you.”

She looked about her hurriedly ; leaning towards me then, she whispered, “ Now you’re out of the house—away from them all, why not go on and on through the wood, and never return ? ”

“ You mean,” I said, staring at her pale face, at her white hands fluttering at her bosom, “ it would be safer for me, that I’ll never be safe in the house ? ”

“ I mean—it doesn’t matter what I mean. Only, were I you, and had any friends away from here—were not alone as I am alone—I’d go. I’d never return.”

“ Miss Milne,” said I, “ I do assure you that I’m not afraid. Why should I run away ? ”

“ Afraid ! ” she whispered still. “ You’re only a fool. You’re only a boy. Your life’s before you. Why would you stay ? Hoping to profit,

and be rich, when that old man is dead ? Is that why you'd stay ? There's no price that's worth your life—to you. Why did you ever come to such a house, or, knowing them for what they are, remain ? ”

“ They are my folk,” I muttered, thinking her—from the wildness of her look, the sudden fevered shining of her eyes, the ceaseless fluttering of her thin hands—distraught from the terrors of the house ; recalling how, day after day, she sat by me at table, uttering not a word, and addressed by no one ; going then from table to be seen no more, till the next meal was served. She had been no more to me than a pale grey shadow in the house of shadows.

Nor had I felt in her more interest than to ask Oliver carelessly how she spent her days ; and he had answered, “ Hid in her room for the most, haunting the garden ; she's lifeless, bloodless, the wraith of a maid.”

“ They are my folk,” then, I muttered, staring at her.

“ Your folk ! Are you as they ? ” she whispered still. “ You think only of the money the old man has, and care not how 'twas come by. You'll smile and fawn on him—that man, that evil old man—as his son smiles and fawns. Knowing—as you must know—— ”

“The manner of man he is, and the manner of the men about him? The danger I’m like to meet? Miss Milne, I’m not afraid. They failed once; do you know that?”

“I know—yes, I know. They failed once; they’ll not fail again”—suddenly leaning forward clasping her hands, peering at me with wild bright eyes, and whispering, “Go! Go now ere it’s too late. Go! and take me with you from this house—this wicked house!”

I was silent, and stared at her, colouring; thinking her surely mad—such the wildness and terror of her look; as realising, she seemed to struggle to control herself; facing me white and quivering, she said at last more calmly, “Mr. Craike, I hear so many secrets in the house. I have lived here so many years—so many lonely years, and am so little accounted, that they do not heed me, or care, if I hear many things that, if they feared me, I would not hear and know. Knowing—I do beseech you, do not stay within the house! Oh, let no thought of loss, if you offend your grandfather, prevail with you! Go!—ere it is too late!”

I said, standing clumsily before her, no longer meeting her look, “Miss Milne, you ask me to assist you. I know—surely by now I know—the house is no house for a maid; I’ll aid you to

leave it. Have you no kin or friends out of the house ? ”

“ No kin, no friends. I have lived in this house since I was a little child. No friends within the house ; none in all the world.”

“ I’ve a purse of gold,” I said. “ I’ll give it to you. With it you may make your way to London and seek out Mr. Bradbury. With this message from me—that he conduct you to my mother, who will befriend you. Come—here’s the purse. I’ll go with you through the wood. You may take a coach from the village inn and drive to London. But I stay here.”

She drew back from me. She whispered, “ No ! Go now, and take me with you ! How should I find my way to London alone, or seek out this man Bradbury, or your mother ? I have lived nigh all my life in this house ; I am afraid. Go with me ! ”

“ Miss Milne, I must remain,” I said.

“ For money ? ” she said, with scorn ; but I answered, “ Think that if you will. For adventure, for a promise.”

“ It’s like to end in death,” cried she, and drew back from me.

“ Well, then, what have you heard ? ” I asked.

“ Plots ! Plots ! What use to tell you, if you

will not heed me ? If I tell you, will you go from this house ? Will you take me out of it ? ”

“ I do not say I’ll go. But I’ll help you, surely ! ”

She looked at me with her eyes now dark and sullen ; bitterly she said, “ I’ve given you warning. I’ll not tell you more. Why should I tell you aught I know ? What do I know of you save that you seem a boy—a fool—and not yet lost as they. Though coming of their stock—— ”

“ I do assure you,” I stammered, “ I—— ”

She burst out, “ Stay—if you will ! Stay ! And yet I warn you.” She slipped from me, and vanished like a wraith into the shadows of the wood.



NOW attempting to follow Miss Milne, and have further conversation with her, I found myself presently in a wild tangle of the wood, so that I had much difficulty in forcing my way through it. Not finding her, bramble-scratched and moss-stained at last I reached the wall, and followed it down, thinking to find the breach by which I had left the garden. But as I approached it, I halted suddenly, hearing voices from the garden; and, knowing them for the voices of Blunt and Martin Baynes and my uncle, engaged in an unseemly wrangle, I rejoiced that I was still hidden by the creepers hanging over the wall.

Blunt was growling, "Ay, ay, you've given me to know you'll be rich, when the old man's gone. You think to lay your hands then on the spoil he's piled up and held all these years. Ay, but the old man's alive, and I'm sailin' again with never a penny of profit to me."

"And the lad's come to the old man," Martin broke in, "and by all saying he's likely to have

every penny, and you not the colour of a farthing. What d'ye say to that, Mr. Craike?—what d'ye say?”

My uncle answered disdainfully, “You get nothing from me. You're a pretty pair of rogues to come and threaten. I trust you, Baynes, to hold the rogue and you to take him aboard, Blunt; and he slips through your hands. I wonder at your audacity.”

“Fine talk!” cried Blunt; and Martin burst out, “You'll pay nothing! Will you not? What if I go to old Sir Gavin? What if I give him the tale? He'd listen and he'd set you by the heels, as gladly as he'd set Roger Galt. Though you're one of his kind——”

“You have it,” my uncle assented, “one of Sir Gavin's kind. Do you threaten me, Martin Baynes,—you, for all the repute of the Stone House and Mistress Baynes and her grandsons? Are there not strange tales of the Stone House—of travellers lost on the moors? Of a pedlar whose dog was heard wailing at the gates of the Stone House, as dogs wail for their dead masters? Do you threaten me, Martin Baynes? And you, Blunt? Did you never sail further than the coasts of France? Did you never plunder an English ship? Were you never more than smuggler?”

“Never more,” cried Blunt, “than Edward Craike, and never so much.”

“A gentleman of fortune,” said my uncle, “a voyager born a hundred years and odd after his time. Tush, that my father profited by his voyages is nothing, Blunt; he plundered no English ships; if his men spilt any blood, it was not English.”

“Barwise in his cups——” Blunt began.

“Barwise is just such a besotted fellow,” cried my uncle, “as should pitch you the tale you’d wish to hear, Blunt. Now ere you two presume to threaten me, think who’ll believe you? If I sought to keep John Howe out of the house, and have him shipped overseas—what of it? What should this count against me save with a few virtuous fools to whose praise or blame I am indifferent? D’ye think I’ve no credit with His Majesty’s Ministers? D’ye think that the Town would ever regard me as other than a man of birth and fashion? What if there be rumours of my father’s past, or scandal against me? Your words would avail you nothing. But you, you rogues; the word from me would hang you both. Tush, when you threaten me, you’re fools.”

“We want no more than payment,” Blunt growled.

“That I’d not have to give you, if you’d earned it.”

“There’s money in the house,” Blunt urged. “There’s plate. There’s talk of a great chest of gold and jewels.”

“I would,” said my uncle softly, “I might dip my hands into it.”

“D’ye not know of it ? ” Blunt asked. “D’ye not know it’s talk among all the folk of the house that the old man hid the richest stuff he ever took ? ”

“I do not know this, Blunt—upon my honour.”

“And I know,” Martin struck in, “that whatsoever the old man has is like to go to his grandson. And that the old man’s threatened you, if you so much as lift a finger against the boy, he’ll not spare you. I have it from old Thrale.”

“Tush,” said my uncle, “I’ve listened too long, my friends. Your threats do not perturb me. I hold the cards, not you. I know nothing of such a chest. Pray, go ! Well for you to be sailing, Blunt. Sir Gavin is no fool, and the *Wasp* lies off the coast too long for your security. And well for you, Martin Baynes, to be sailing with Blunt ; you’re idle ; you’re mischievous ; you’d be well away.”

“ Ay, and the lad ? ” Blunt asked. “ Would you have him sail with us yet ? ”

“ I have no preference.”

“ Ay, but if you knew he was safe aboard, and sailing with me—not for France, for pickings in the Indies—would you find me the hundred guineas then, Mr. Craike, ere I sailed ? ”

“ I should find one hundred guineas with ease,” my uncle answered. “ I suggest nothing, direct nothing—have no share in any plot against my nephew. Yet if I knew—and none here knew—that he was safely under hatches, Blunt, I’d pay this hundred guineas ere you sailed.”

“ He’ll be out of the house this night, aboard by the morning,” Blunt vowed.

I heard my uncle’s light laughter ; I heard him humming a tune as he walked away. Blunt and Martin came scrambling over the wall, and not detecting me hidden under the creepers, tramped away through the wood.



NOW for a space I lay hid under the wall, having no mind to enter the garden and meet my uncle, but seeking time to review the perils threatening me, and the steps by which I should avoid them. I believed that Blunt, ere he made his offer to my uncle, had already planned with the old rogues my removal from the house, and that of this the girl Evelyn Milne would have warned me. I thought first of going immediately to my grandfather and of laying the plot before him ; having with me always the thought of the broken figure, of the will striving ever to prevail over decay, I could perceive little hope from such a course. Had Miss Milne faced me now ; had she appealed to me to take her out of the house, and escape with her to my friends, I should have hesitated not at all ; my concern for myself urged me to instant flight ; yet I was no such coward as to take to my heels, and leave her friendless in a house of which she had expressed such terror. I could devise no better plan than further to search the wood for her, and if I failed

to find her, proceed to seek out Sir Gavin Masters, tell my tale to him, and urge his intervention and protection for us, and his immediate communication with Mr. Bradbury. I marvelled that one so acute as Mr. Bradbury, knowing the character of the house and its folks, and the peril I must encounter, should have thought fit to leave me at Rogues' Haven.

I remained hid under the wall, till Blunt and Martin should be well away ; crawling back then to the wood I sought the girl as best I might, fearing to call her name, lest I bring my enemies upon me. Failing, I forced my way out of the old plantation ; struggled through a ditch ; climbed through a sunken fence, and muddy and torn with brambles, sought the road by which Mr. Bradbury had brought me to Craike House.

It was now toward noon of a clear day ; the wood was green about me ; the sunlight and the sense of freedom after the terrors of the close old house restored my spirits speedily. I had a certain compunction at my flight—leaving the girl, and, indeed, my grandfather, old and broken, among the covetous rogues. I told myself that I should save them better by reaching Sir Gavin Masters, yet I could not rid my mind of the thought that by running off in fear of Blunt I played the coward. So much at last this

thought concerned me, that even on the very bank above the road I stood irresolute. Not yet was I resolved when the sound of hoof-beats made me cower into the grass, for fear lest any of my enemies should ride that way. Peering through the covert, I saw a stout red-coated gentleman mounted on a cob; with joy I recognised Sir Gavin Masters. He paused below me, sheltering his eyes with his hand against the sun, he was staring up toward Craike House, whose chimney stacks alone showed above the wood. As I rose out of the grass, he uttered an exclamation; his hand sought the pistol in his holster.

“Sir Gavin,” cried I, “don’t you know me—John Craike?”

“Aha, Master Craike—aha!” He laughed and touched his hat with his whip. “What are you doing here, lad? Walking abroad?”

“Seeking you, Sir Gavin. Asking your help and advice. Purposing as soon as I may to seek Mr. Bradbury in London.”

“Oho, not liking the house and the folk in it,” drawing in by the bank, and beckoning me to him.

Standing beside him, I saw that his face, which I had thought dull as worthy Mr. Chelton’s, was marked by a certain strength and intelligence; his eyes watched me shrewdly. He muttered,

"So you've had trouble, lad! You want advice from me and Bradbury. Well then!"

"Mr. Bradbury being now in London——"
I began.

"Mr. Bradbury," he laughed, "is no further away than at my house. That's for your ear alone. He's within your reach whenever you may have need of him."

"I've need of him at once," I said, overjoyed.

"Must you have speech with him?" he asked, "or is it a word that I may carry to him?" I looked at him doubtfully; he went on swiftly, "Mr. Bradbury made no mention to you of his association with me, I being newly-appointed justice of the peace for these parts, and bent on enforcing His Majesty's laws, and putting an end to a variety of evil-doings. I'm well-informed of Bradbury's wishes. It's his wish that you remain at Craike House. You're running away. Why?"

"Having overheard a pretty plot to put me aboard Blunt's ship and get me out of England. Fearing—ay, fearing though you think me a coward, sir, to stay in the house with never a friend."

"Young Oliver! You've been riding abroad with him; you were swimming in the sea with him this morn. You seemed friends."

“ You saw us, sir ? ”

“ Some of my folk. Oliver’s your friend ? ”

“ Yes, my friend, but—— ”

“ I tell you this, John Craike,” he said, impatiently, “ if you’ll believe me and trust me and my folk, knowing that Bradbury’s within reach, you’ll go back to the house. I promise you none of the rogues in the house’ll do you hurt, while old Mr. Edward lives, and I promise you Blunt’ll never take you out of it or ship you aboard. For Blunt’ll never sail.” He spoke now in low and earnest tone, his eyes keeping a sharp watch, as if apprehensive lest any overhear or see us together. “ Hark ’ee,” he said, “ go back ! It’s well that you stay to profit by your grandfather’s fancy for you. Take my assurance for it, lad ; my plans and Bradbury’s are surely set ; they’re one and the same. Take my word for it.”

“ Ay, but the old man’s near to dying,” I said, doubtfully.

He muttered, “ So ! Bradbury gave me no word of it.”

Rapidly I recounted the nature of my interviews with my grandfather, his orders to his servants, his collapse on that first morning, my belief that his reason tottered,—all the whispering menace of the rogues about us. I told him of my

uncle's conversation with Blunt and Martin, and of the warning from Miss Milne.

He heard me attentively, his brows frowning. He said at last, " Ay, ay,—and for all Bradbury's plans it's high time to make an end—high time ! But first I must have a word with Bradbury. Will you go back this day assured that speedily you'll hear from us ? "

I answered, " If you'll have it so, Sir Gavin, surely I'll go."

He dipped his hand into his holster ; drew out a pistol ; and handed it to me swiftly. He took a little bag from his pocket, and muttered, " The barker's loaded. Here's powder and ball. In case you need it, lad. You go back ! "

I answered, " Yes, I'll go back, and I'll remain till I hear from Mr. Bradbury and understand his wishes."

He said, " I promise you you'll hear from us at once, lad ! "—and as I plunged up the bank, he turned his cob and rode off rapidly.

IT was afternoon when I climbed back through the breach in the wall and dropped into the garden. I had noted, as I went through the garden that morning, an arbour overgrown with honeysuckle ; in the sunshine now it was a pavilion of gold and green. I was hurrying by this arbour when I was startled to hear my uncle's voice.

"Nephew !" he called ; and, turning, I saw him in the arbour, lounging indolently on an old garden seat of marble, yellow with age and stains ; his arms outstretched along its back ; he seemed bloodless, ivory-white, in the green shade.

"Nephew !" he called again, and beckoned to me. Much as I feared and hated him I obeyed him. He smiled benignly on me ; observing my colour and the disorder of my dress, he asked, "Why, nephew, nephew, into what mischief have you been straying ? You're too old for boyish pranks, and I assume too young for philandering."

I answered, "I've been walking in the wood."

"The wood !" he repeated. "You're gaining

confidence in us, John. A week or two since and you'd not have had the courage to stir from the house. And yet the wood is none too safe, nephew."

I answered boldly, "I agree with you, sir. For example, I chanced upon two rogues, Blunt and Martin Baynes."

Maybe my tones confirmed the suspicions he had formed when I came scrambling over the wall. He said drily, "You mean more than your words, John. The encounter should warn you not to walk in the wood, or yet ride down to the coast with my son. Mayhap, Oliver is no more than a decoy"—his lips curling.

"I do not think it of my cousin," I said.

"Oh, I'm happy to have your assurance, John. You look to find a friend in Oliver. And yet I should not think it, John. My lad's well enough, but rough, uncouth; I fear he does me poor credit. How he passes his days I know not. He's dissolute; you've observed him with the bottle."

He broke off, as wearying of the theme; he looked languidly over the sunlit garden to the ivied walls, "Here's the very wreck and ruin of a great house, John!" he sighed. "I have a notion—nay, since your coming I have it not—of shaping order out of chaos. Here in this garden,

with a book on such a sunlit afternoon ; but here, with delightful arbours, trim walks and plots of flowers,—a fountain playing silver ! Mark that old fountain, John—the form of it, the seamaiads who support the sea-green shells ; the fountain's dry ; the lovely shapes of bronze corroded. Or the designs on this pale marble : see where the moss grows green in these delicate designs of Italy. The sun-dial where the sparrows chirp—why, here's an enchanted garden, John, where time stands still, as in the old wives' tale. Ay, see the hedge of thorns grows all about the castle ! Time stands still ! Nay, ah nay ! I'd picture, John, the garden in the days when the second Charles was King of England. Why, I have looked from my window of a summer night, and I have seen the ghosts walk in the garden, as it was, and I have known the beauty and the colour and the laughter of this garden and this house, as once they were. I have thought of the beauty of Craike House restored, the greatness of our race—ah me ! Here am I, penniless son of—Mr. Edward Craike ; penniless parent of—Oliver ! I'd tell my hope to you, John Craike, that, if you win, you yet may care to carry out my own ambition.”

He had spoken earnestly ; while his fine, melancholy voice sounded, I did believe him,—

knowing him for a rogue. His mood did not endure. He laughed, and eyeing me, he said, "So you've progressed, my friend, in the favour of your grandfather. So you're a master in the house, and his retainers take their orders from you as from himself!"

"He did no more than insure me against insolence," I answered uneasily. "You're well served, my uncle!"

"Oh, I am!" he conceded. "To be sure, the woman Barwise came raging to me that morning. They're servile to you, nephew, are they not? Thinking my father not yet in his dotage! And yet he is so near to breaking." His eyes held mine; he said quietly, "Nephew, I've a proposal to you, more than truce—alliance. Liking you!"

"As you've surely proved, sir!"

"Yet hear me out," he said. "You stand in favour with your grandfather. But you're no fool; what should you say would happen, were the old man's wits to go wandering, or were he to die, suddenly, as old men die, if they be fortunate? How should you fare at the hands of all these rogues, John?"

"Or at your hands?" I muttered.

"Or at my hands! I compliment you, nephew, on your wit. Or at the hands of Blunt,

or Barwise ? This old man so near to dying or to dotage, nephew ! I put this to you."

"Why, I'd suffer no more," said I, "than Mr. Bradbury would speedily call you to account for."

"A lonely house," he muttered, "so near the coast. And none save old Sir Gavin within miles of us. Should we not work our will with you, and set our fingers on what's hid in the house, and be away—in France, or whither in the world we would—ere Bradbury might lift a finger."

"What's hid in the house !" I repeated.

With sudden impatience he cried out, "Ay, what's hid in the house ! Why not be frank with me, nephew ? You know this—Bradbury knows, as I—there's in this house more than a moiety of all my father ever took on his voyages. There's treasure in this house, about this house ; and one man knows where it is hidden. And one man knows, and this one man may die, or his mind grow dark, and he forget, and it never be known. You know of the existence of this treasure, nephew, this secret hoard of his—and yet you lie to me !"

Unguardedly I answered, "I've heard no more than a talk of the treasure."

"When ? From whom ?" he took me up

instantly, and his face was livid, and his eyes were two evil gems. "This morn! Surely you heard this morn. Talk near the wall there. Or do you know from him?"

I said coolly, "I'll tell you nothing."

He mastered himself; he lay back on the seat; his lips sneered at me. "I would have made alliance with you, nephew," he said. "I would have shared with you—as kinsman. I would have offered you security. Ay, I offer it now."

I answered deliberately, "I'll have no dealings with you. None!"

"Nephew," he said, with mock severity, "I abhor duplicity. I confess myself mistaken in you. Pray go! You stand between me and the sunshine!"

I swung upon my heel and left him. I heard him humming his little tune as I climbed the steps.

I PASSED the remainder of the day in my room with a book. Now I have since found agreeable entertainment in the works of Mr. Fielding; but though I had before me *The History of Amelia*, I heeded little of aught I read. I had good cause for reflection. That I was yet in the old house; that all about me were my enemies; though I had Sir Gavin's assurance no hurt should befall me, I yet dreaded that steps would be taken to spirit me away, and Blunt, having laid hands on me, would elude pursuit. I looked for Mr. Bradbury's arrival; Mr. Bradbury did not come.

None came nigh me; my grandfather did not summon me to his presence. The day closed clouded; the darkness of the sky and the rising wind promised storm to follow on the sunshine of the day. At dusk, Thrale came with lighted candles; but for the warmth of the evening I bade him leave the fire unlit. I made my toilet hurriedly for dinner at the clangour of the bell through the house; secreting the loaded

pistol in my tail-pocket, and praying God that I should not sit upon it forgetful, I went down into the dining-hall. My grandfather, leaning upon his son, entered ahead of me ; he gave me no word or nod in greeting. I stood apart with Oliver, and Evelyn Milne, who did not glance at me or speak to me ; Oliver seemed to have returned half-drunken from the alehouse in the village, whither he had ridden that day.

Regarding my grandfather, as his son assisted him to his chair, I saw with apprehension that his face was livid ; his eyes were dull and heavy ; the rubies blazed upon his shaking hands. And from the gloom behind his chair the old rogues watched him. I heard them mutter and whisper among themselves ; I knew that the sickness so plainly on my grandfather could not be lost even to their dull eyes and wits. The girl was whispering by me, "He's sick ! To death ! Had you but listened to me !"

I paid her no heed. I set myself to my meal ; seeking by exercise of will to hide my perturbation from my uncle, whom I saw watching me with eyes triumphant and malignant. The old man sat staring before him. The tapers waved in the draughts of cold air. I know not what my grandfather saw in that pale light or in those shadows seeming to dance a wild dance all about

us, as the ever-rising wind beat on the house, and found its way into the room by chink and broken pane. I had a prescience that death was in the wind that night ; that the dead from the deep called him at last to be of their company for ever.

My uncle essayed gay conversation ; the old man sat beside him like the very figure of death ; he uttered not a word ; he would have lifted a glass to his lips, and the spilt red wine dyed his mouth and hands. As the glass broke upon the board, my uncle, with assumed concern, said in a loud, clear voice, as if to be assured it reached the ears of all the rogues, standing peering from the shadows like so many carrion crows. " You're sick, sir ! Shall I aid you to your room ? "

He cried out angrily, " I'm well ! I'm well ! Another glass ! "

Thrall, filling a glass, handed it to him ; I understood from the working of the old man's face and by the sweat upon his brow the bitter struggle of the breaking will to assert itself. My grandfather lifted the wine to his lips, and sipped a little of it. He sought then to eat, but ate nothing ; he sat stiffly in his chair, until the girl had gone like a pale ghost from the room ; and the cloth was drawn. She cast a look at me,

as I rose at her departure ; and there was terror in her eyes,—as there was terror in my mind. For the ending struggle of the old man's will and body, for the clamour of the winds about the house, for all the faces peering malevolently from the dark, for the ghostly dance of lights and shadows ; always the cold draughts struck in and set the candles flickering :

My uncle, filling his glass, invited me to take wine with him ; Oliver was drinking heavily. " A glass of wine, nephew ! " cried my uncle, gaily. " A glass of wine with me."

My grandfather muttered suddenly, " Do you make a play for me, Charles ? "

" Make a play, sir ! " Charles repeated. " Forgive me. I am dull. I do not understand you."

" Ay,—do you pretend friendship—affection, for—for your brother's son, or your brother, sitting over there ? "

My uncle, looking at me, cried out in amaze, " My brother, sir ! My nephew, surely ! "

" Nay ! Nay ! " the old man insisted, testily. " Your brother ! "

" The lad, sir ? " Charles faltered.

" The lad ! Damn the lad ! Are you blind, Charles ? Are you blind ? Your brother sitting there ! " His shaking hand stole out ; he

pointed not at me, but at the empty chair beside me, "Your brother—Richard!"

And now my uncle's triumphant look had fled. Now staring fearfully, now in turn shaking, he whispered, "Sir, you're sick! No one sits there. Pray let me aid you from the table," and rose and offered his hand.

The old man thrust it from him, and pointed still. "Sick! Are you drunk, Charles, that you do not see? Richard!"

"Sitting there!"

"Ay, sitting there! Would you have me think him a ghost, Charles? Would you have me think him dead?"

"I pray not!" my uncle whispered. I saw that he was ashen, and stared at nothing wildly, as the old man stared at nothing, pointed at no one. Suddenly my grandfather lowered his hand; the light seemed to die out from his eyes. He sat mute and stiff; his fingers with the red gems flaming upon them gripping the board. My uncle lifted his glass hastily to his lips.

"To whom would you drink, Charles?" my grandfather muttered. "What toast?"

"Surely your health, sir! Your health!"

"You lie!" he roared, and started from his chair. An instant I saw him standing with the aspect of a madman upon him: the rush of blood

to his dark face lent him the appearance of youth ; his right hand was raised high. A moment I saw him—surely I saw him—for the manner of man he had been.

He clutched at his breast, cried out ; and fell back in his chair.

Chapter XXIX. Intervention of Mr. Bradbury

AT the immediate confusion and rush of figures I started up to assist my uncle ; Thrale and his fellow-servants were before me. My uncle cried out, "Stand back, nephew ! Stand back all of you ; let him have air !"—and the crowding of the old men about the chair withheld me from my grandfather. So the event held me that I was insensible to other sound than the gasping of the old man ; I caught a glimpse of his face, livid and sweating, as his head rested against my uncle's breast ; his eyes were agonised. I saw Nick Barwise thrust the old men aside ; supported by him and my uncle my grandfather was aided from the room, while the old rogues fluttered and squeaked and gibbered about him. As they led him past me, I realised that Evelyn Milne was back in the room and was plucking at my sleeve and crying in my ear, "Are you deaf ? Are you daft ? Hark to the knocking on the door ! Why don't you bid them open ?"

And I heard the clashing of the knocker and

the beating on the door above the wind, as if death or the devil came in the storm, and clamoured for admission. I heard my uncle crying out, "Keep the door fast! No one comes in this night!" I stood confused, hoping that the knocking told the arrival of Mr. Bradbury at the house, and dreading lest Blunt and his rogues were come to take me openly and violently; still the knocking sounded over the beating wind. The old men, crowding out after my grandfather, muttered and laughed in wicked glee, that surely at last the end was come. And only the girl and Oliver and I were left in the room with the candles casting their ghostly lights upon us; and the weird shadows, dancing all about us; always the gale cried out about the house; the heavy, steady knocking sounded on the door.

"Who should come?" the girl cried to me. "Who should knock so? Your friends—have you friends like to come? Or friends of Charles Craike and the folk within the house?"

Dazed yet, but calling to mind Sir Gavin's promise, I said, "I think my friends—I hope—I'll go and open the door!"

"No, no!" cried she. "Stay here in the light! You're safer in the light. I'll go!" and instantly sped from the room.

With my back to the fire, and my fingers set upon the pistol, I stood and looked at Oliver ; he sat at table still, seeming drunken and insensible of the old man's sudden sickness, the tumult of the storm, the knocking at the door. But his dull, tragical, young eyes meeting mine, I was amazed to hear him give expression to my first fantastic thought, "Death and the Devil knock ! They're come for him ! Hark !"

The door from the hall swung open. I saw the faces—the old brown faces and the evil eyes of the rogues ; I knew how they hated me ; what shift I should have at their hands, if but the word came down that their stricken master was dead. I heard them gibe and mutter ; I heard the woman Barwise's voice cracked and shrill, "Ay, he'll not lord it over us. No longer ! Ay, by the Lord he'll not !"—but her sudden scream, "Who's that ? Who let you in ?"

Mr. Bradbury cried out from the hall, "By your leave, Mistress Barwise,—by your leave !"

At this I rushed to the door, and met him thrusting his way among the crowding rogues. He came in calm and trim, flinging back his cloak, and drawing off his gloves. He gave me his hand, and exclaiming, "Ah, my dear sir !" demanded, "What's to do here ? What's all

this chattering and clattering ? Why am I kept waiting at the door on a night like this ? What's to do ? ”

“ My grandfather ! ” I gasped. “ Sick ! Dying maybe—— ”

“ So ! ” he said, swiftly, and an instant I saw perturbation in his look. He had not come alone. I saw three tall fellows, great-coated armed with bludgeons, standing in the doorway, and at their back the malignant, baffled faces of the rogues. The two runners and a third fellow—a huge figure, vaguely familiar to me, though he was muffled about his jaws, and kept his hat tilted over his nose, so that I could not see his face. Oliver lay back in his chair, seeming sodden with drink.

“ Thrale ! ” cried Mr. Bradbury, “ Mistress Barwise—some of you ! ”

The woman, pushing her way forward, stood before him, her arms akimbo, demanding, insolently, “ Well, sir—well ? ”

“ Announce to Mr. Charles Craike my arrival. Tell him that I require to see him at once. At once ! D’ye hear me ? ”

“ Hoity-toity ! ” cried the woman, bridling. “ Who are you to be orderin’ me ? ”—but quailed and recoiled before Mr. Bradbury’s sudden darkling anger.

“D’ye hear me?” Mr. Bradbury repeated.
“D’ye understand me, baggage? At once!”

“What is this?”—and my uncle, seeming to have been summoned on the admission of Mr. Bradbury and his men, stood in the doorway.

“Ah, my dear sir!” Mr. Bradbury exclaimed, stepping forward, his hand outstretched.

“Mr. Bradbury,” said my uncle coolly, “your coming’s most inopportune!”

“I realise it,” Mr. Bradbury agreed readily.
“Most inopportune!”

“My father’s sudden seizure! He’s nigh to death.”

“My profound sympathy, sir, with you in your natural grief. My profound sympathy! Pray conduct me to him!”

“Mr. Bradbury, you assume an extraordinary air of authority,” my uncle protested. “My father cannot see you.”

“Authority!” said Mr. Bradbury, coldly.
“My dear sir, I take my authority from my clients. I take it from Mr. Edward Craike. I am here to act at once in his interests, and in the interests of my client here, Mr. John Craike.”

The gentleman faced him, and barred his way. He said, “I regret, Mr. Bradbury, that you cannot see my father.”

“ And I say to you, Mr. Craike, that I insist on seeing him.”

“ By gad, sir, you insist ! Will you force your way to him, dying ? ”

“ I ask you, sir, to spare me the necessity. I am here this night by Mr. Craike’s desire, expressed to me on my last visit. His business with me, he instructed me, would be of supreme importance.”

“ I tell you he’s near death.”

“ Who then ? ” said Mr. Bradbury, with a wave of his hand, “ should give orders in this house except his grandson and heir ? ”

I heard the mutter of voices and the shrill, crackling laughter from the door ; I saw my uncle’s eyes blaze at me like gems ; the woman Barwise glare at me and clench her hands in her skirts. I took my cue instantly from Mr. Bradbury. “ And I,” I said, “ insist that Mr. Bradbury accompany me at once to my grandfather. Come, sir ! ”

My uncle looked upon me ; the mask was lifted ; and all his hate of me was revealed upon his face. I took a candle from the shelf, and signed to Mr. Bradbury to follow me. I thought that Charles Craike would bar my way, or strike me down, or cry out to the rogues not to let me pass ; to my amaze my uncle stepped aside with a contemptuous bow.

“Bid your men follow us!” I said to Mr. Bradbury; so we went out among the rogues in the hall, and up the stairway and by the gallery to my grandfather’s room.

“Wait here,” said Mr. Bradbury to his men; and opening the door, drew back the curtain and stepped with me into the room. My grandfather, wrapped in his gown, lay in his chair. He seemed the very figure of death; the candlelight and the dancing fire showed his face livid; his eyes staring at us were anguished; no one was with him except Thrale, who held a glass. My grandfather’s hands gripped the arms of his chair; the sweat dripped from his face. All the while the lamenting winds were beating on the windows, the curtains of the bed were waving; the flickering lights and shadows dancing a ghostly dance about the room. His voice came gasping. “Bradbury! Ah, not too late,—though death’s crying out for me this night.”

“I am here,” said Mr. Bradbury simply, “somewhat ahead of the appointed time, Mr. Craike. I have with me the document drawn in accordance with your instructions. I ask but your approval and signature, sir. Go, Thrale! Your grandson, sir, must not remain.”

“Nay, bid him wait outside the door. Go, lad, go!”

I went out after Thrale, and Mr. Bradbury locked the door upon me. I waited in the corridor with the three fellows standing grim about me. I wondered that presently Mr. Bradbury should summon the two runners into the room, leaving me with his third attendant. I heard the tempest battering upon the old house, and shuddered for the deathly chill of the corridor and for the shadows seeming to cower beyond the radius of the candlelight. The tall fellow by me was growling presently at my ear, "D'ye not know me, master? Roger Galt, as got ye out of the Stone House. Didn't think to see me here, did ye? 'Set a thief to catch a thief,' says Mr. Bradbury. Hist!"

BUT ere I might question Roger Galt, I saw my uncle come swiftly out of the darkness of the corridor ; remarking me holding a candle high he gave me not a word and only a malignant glance, and without knocking he would have thrust open the door. But Mr. Bradbury had turned the key ; and the gentleman turning to me, his face revealing his rage, though his voice was smooth, he said, " So, nephew, though you're heir of Craike, you permit Bradbury to lock you out in the cold ! What's the gentleman's business then ? "

" Business at which he'd not have you or me disturb him," I answered.

He assented, " Ay, no doubt ! But would he keep me from my father's death-bed ? "—and knocked angrily upon the door.

Awhile Mr. Bradbury paid no heed ; my uncle, knocking repeatedly and failing to obtain an answer, drew away from the door ; and, mastering his choler, said quizzically to me,

“ Well for you, John, you’re telling yourself, no doubt, that Bradbury and his hinds found their way into this house to-night. You’re bidding fair to lose your guardian and protector—eh ? ”

“ Well for me,” I answered, “ as you know, sir.”

“ And does Bradbury think to keep me shivering here ? ”—he was beginning, but ceased, as Mr. Bradbury unlocked the door.

“ Your pardon, Charles,” said Mr. Bradbury, smoothly, “ but my business with your father was private and particular. Pray step in ! Your natural anxiety may be allayed. You’ll find Mr. Craike much easier in mind and body,”—smiling blandly, and ushering my uncle into the room. The thief-catchers coming out, he bade them await him. “ Pray step in, Mr. John,” he said to me, laying his hand upon my arm, and leading me in at my uncle’s heels.

My grandfather lay in his chair ; though he was ghastly of look, and his body was propped up with cushions, his sweating had ceased ; his eyes, if dull, were sane and steady. My uncle, looking down on him, assured him, “ I’m happy to see you better, sir ! Shall I ring for Thrale ? Were there a physician within miles—— ”

“ No ! When I need Thrale, I’ll ring,” the old man answered huskily. “ But hark ’ee, Charles,

hark 'ee"—seeming to labour with his speech, his hands shaking on the arms of his chair.

"I listen, sir," said Charles.

"Ay, that's well! You thought me broken, Charles!"

"I am so much relieved that——"

"Oh, ay! We're all liars, Charles! I promise there was a pretty to-do, when I was taken sick."

"The natural alarm of your old servants."

"I picture 'em," he croaked, chuckling, "thinking me dying. Plotting mutiny, and robbing me of what I have; thinking to lay hands on what they've itched for all these years."

"Sir, you agitate yourself unnecessarily," Charles protested. "Let me ring for Thrale to help you to bed."

"No. I'll have the boy by me. Richard's son. Hey, Bradbury, you're going and will soon be back?"

"Immediately I have carried out your instructions, Mr. Craike," said Mr. Bradbury.

"Ay, and you'll be careful lest Charles or any of 'em seek to rob you by the way,"—chuckling to himself.

"Sir, you wrong me cruelly," said Charles.

"Take a message down to 'em, Charles," said the old man malignantly. "This from me—two words; 'Not yet!'"—and chuckled still; and

huskily went on, "Not a night in all my years of sailing they'd not have made an end of me, had they known me sick and broken as they think me now. If I'd have died to-night, they'd have been drunk by now on the best from my cellars; they'd have been searching all over the house for what they'll never get. Give 'em the words from me, Charles! Not yet!"

"And pray give them this from me, Mr. Charles—under authority from their master," cried Mr. Bradbury, "that with this night there's an end of their doings in this house. Tell them that, though I go, I return to make an end!"

"You go!" my uncle repeated, smiling on Mr. Bradbury, "and you return! Surely, Bradbury."

I had a notion instantly that he contemplated directing attack on Mr. Bradbury, believing that the gentleman bore with him the secret of my grandfather's hoard—if there were hoard. Or, indeed, that my uncle had remained downstairs after us to give instructions to the stouter rogues.

"I go armed and with my men armed," said Mr. Bradbury significantly. "Let them understand this for an obvious reason, Charles. And that I have friends at hand. With whom I shall return. Come, John!"

"Nay, the boy stays by me," my grandfather piped from his chair.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Bradbury, taken aback.

"John stays by me! Or by God, Bradbury, I'll—I'll—you'll not take away—what you take! Charles, but those words 'Not yet!' and there's not a dog among 'em shall bark this night. Am I not master yet? Am I not, Bradbury?"

He grew so violent, the blood rushing to his face, the sweat starting from him, that Mr. Bradbury hastened to pacify him. "Surely, sir, surely," he said, "Mr. John will stay, if you'll have it so."

"I'll have it so! Hark 'ee, John, are you afraid to watch the night through with me?"

"I'm not afraid," I lied. "To be sure I'll stay!"—though I was shaking in my shoes, and would have given much to be out of the house with Mr. Bradbury.

He nodded approval. He muttered, "Bradbury, I've thought to die on a night like this! To go out on the storm. Hark to the wind and the voices in it! And the wind blows from the sea. Oh, God, there's many a soul of the dead men out of the sea rides with the wind to-night!"

"Sir," cried Mr. Bradbury, shuddering, "the

dead shall not rise from the sea till the last trump sound ! ”

“ I’ll have the boy by me,” the old man whispered. “ I’ll have him watch. I’ll lie upon my bed ; I’ll rest—if he’ll watch by me.”

“ Surely, sir,” said Charles, “ I am willing to sit with you ! ”

“ I’ll have the boy,” he growled. “ Not you—John here ! ”

Mr. Bradbury, securing his cloak about him, said in a clear voice, though he looked uneasily at me, “ Then, sir, I take my leave of you. Mr. John Craike shall stay by you. But, Charles, let this be known among the folk of this house—it’s no time to mince words : if any harm come to him, I’ll have the reckoning. Gentlemen, I go, and I’ll return with all the speed I may. Good night ! Charles, pray, will you light me down the stair ? ”

NOW the event proved the truth of my assumption that Mr. Bradbury had about him that which he was eager to convey immediately from the house to safety, lest Charles, or Blunt, or any other rogues should lay their hands upon it. He feared to leave me in the house, but believing that my grandfather had a secret purpose in his insistence, he consented, thinking to return speedily with assistance.

My grandfather cried out to my uncle, as he took my candle to light Mr. Bradbury from the room, "You'll not return, Charles, unless I ring!"

Charles, eyeing him askance, nodded, and went out with Mr. Bradbury.

My grandfather, looking cunningly at me, chuckled and muttered, "Good lad! Good lad! You're not afraid of Charles. You'll profit by stayin'. Hey, you will! We'll have the merriest of nights of it. Hark to the wind on the house. Like as if the crew below were knocking. Lock the door and bar it!"

I sped to the door and turned the key, and set

the iron bar across it in its sockets, noting how massive was the door, and how great the lock ; feeling safer then, though dreading the mad humour of my grandfather.

As I would have sat down, he called out, " Find the bottle and the glasses. Pour me a dram ! Pour yourself a dram ; 'twill put heart in you."

Taking bottle and glasses from the press, I poured the drink ; he took his glass in his shaking hand and raised it to his lips, but scarcely tasted the liquor, muttering to me, " Drink, lad ! You're not afraid of your grog, are ye ? You can carry it."

I made pretence of drinking the fiery stuff ; and piling up the fire, I sat down facing him. He remained mute awhile thence, his head poked forward, and his look intent, as though he listened for sounds below. But no sound rose distinguishable from the tumult of the wind ; ever the wind cried out, and beat upon the windows ; and the moon, breaking from the driving clouds, illumined the green panes ; the lashing ivy cutting its pale gleam. Weird lights and shadows flickered on the floor, and seemed to glide towards the bed, cower and leap back, as the clouds took the moon once more, and darkness fell without. So with the fitful moon, the waving candles and the leaping fire, the whole room seemed awlirl with

ghostly lights and shadows; and with the draughts, the curtains of the bed, the tapestries upon the walls, continually were stirred; rustled and flapped like wings, or bulged as though some rogue or visitant were secreted behind them. I sat and shivered by the fire, my mind oppressed with terror and forebodings.

My grandfather, breaking the silence fallen between us, muttered at last, "I've thought to die on such a night as this. Lad, what's after, d'ye think? What's after?"

I answered awkwardly, "We're told mercy to the repentant."

"Repentance!" he said, laughing. "What's repentance but fear? When I was young and strong, I didn't fear aught; I repented nothing. What use now—hey? What d'ye think?"

"I do not know. Yet——"

"Ay, to be safe, be penitent," he mocked. "You think me near my death, lad, and I am. To-night a knife seemed to stick into my heart, and the knife'll strike again, till my heart's broken for the pain of it. I die, soon—maybe this night. I go into the dark. I know not whither. Repent! I'm no such fool or coward. Hey, John, but I lived my life as it pleased me, till I was old. I sinned what sins I would. Repent, ay,—and mutter prayers,—make a good

death of it—for fear ! I've had no god save my own self. I've owned no other judge." He lifted up his shaking hand, and the red jewels seemed blood upon it, "For all my sins I'm ready for the reckoning, repenting nothing, unafraid !"

It seemed as though the very storm took up the challenge. For the wind smote upon the house with a great sound, as seas upon a cliff, or thunder from the heaven. The old house shuddered ; the chimneys rumbled ; the casement was blown back ; the wind struck cold as death upon us. Instantly the candlelight was gone ; the room was black save for the red glow upon the hearth ; horror of darkness and chaotic sound were all about us. I started up, and rushing to the window sought to close the casement ; momentarily the wind prevailed ; vainly I fought against it ; looking back, I saw my grandfather stagger from his chair ; the red flames blowing up from the hearth seemed to burn all about him. Still his laughter sounded like a madman's defiance to the wind.

The wind lulled for the time. I closed the casement ; I hurried back to relight the candles. The curtains of the bed flapped yet like the wings of death about me. With light I saw him lying in his chair ; he shuddered now ; he

muttered, "For the time—I thought—death came. And yet—and yet—I live!"

He remarked then the curtains moving, and pointed to the bed, "When the wind came," he croaked, "I heard the beating of the wings of death. I saw the dark take shape and thought to die, and go out on the storm. 'Twas nothing—nothing but the curtains and the darkness and the cold! Ay, ay, though never have I known ghosts or terrors in the dark and storm until to-night . . . I could tell you . . . We were off the Cape just such a night, with the winds and the seas sounding so. I remember them—Barwise and Thrale and the rest—crying out, and comin' scuttlin' all about me. They'd seen the ghost-ship—the Dutch ship—that seeks to weather the Cape, while time is. I remember the moon riding white through the clouds, as it rides this night. Ay, they vowed that they saw the Dutchman still, the ghosts on the decks, and the lights burning blue,—we'd never make port again, they swore; and they all fell to prayers—Barwise and Thrale and the rest. They to pray! But I said no prayers. For I saw no phantom-ship. And I brought my own ship safe to port. . . . Hark, the wind comes again. Like voices on it! Hark!"

The wind came crying from the sea. Again it

forced the casement open ; as I reached the window, momentarily I saw the garden illumined by the moon. I saw dark shadows hurrying to the house ; I forced the window to, believing for the instant that I had seen only the shadows of the wind-tossed trees ; remembering then Blunt's threat to take me from the house, I feared.

When I re-lit the candles, my grandfather perceived my concern, and caught me by the arm, muttering, "What did ye see ? Or think to see ? "

I answered, "Shadows, maybe, or men—Blunt's men."

"Blunt's men ? Or do ye think 'em ghosts ? Why do ye look so white, lad ? Why should Blunt's men come here this night ? Look again ! "

Returning to the window, opening the casement, and peering down, I saw only the leaping shadows of the trees, much as those dark, hurrying figures. I called back to him, "Shadows—only shadows !" and secured the casement.

We sat in silence then by the fire. The storm was nearing its height ; wave of sound following upon wave of sound as breaker upon breaker ; the house appeared to reel under the succession of shocks,—always the voices sounded on the wind.

If there were sound below, if drunken voices, menacing voices, were uplifted, as seemed to me, I could not be assured ; the wind usurped all sounds, in or without the house. My grandfather lay back in his chair with his hands clutching its arms ; I saw him lift his right hand from time to time, and eye it shaking with the palsy, the red gems leaping into flame upon it ; for all his will and his professed hardihood, I believed that the terror of the night grew on him, even as on me. He leaned forward at last, and quavered, " What's death, d'ye think, lad ? What comes after ? "

" How can I answer ? Who should tell ? " I said, being in no mood now to preach faith or penitence to him.

" You're honest ! " he said, nodding. " Charles would have turned priest. Charles would have talked of Judgment Day. Ay, you're honest ! Eighty years I've lived, and till these weeks past never thought of what came after ; or of to-morrow but as to-day or yesterday. I never thought of myself as dead. John "—with sudden starting terror—" doesn't that show it ? "

" What, sir—what ? "

" When we die and rot and the worms have us, it's not the end of us. We're never able to think of ourselves as dead ! Whether we're

strong and lusting with life, or whether we're old and breaking, we never think of ourselves as dead. Because we never die ! ”

He mumbled on, “ Ay, there's voices in the wind to-night ! Voices I've heard ! I do remember a merchantman—from the East it was—and full to the decks with rich stuffs. Many folks aboard. We boarded it at noon, and we sunk it at eve. None could live ; there were men aboard as had known me. I remember the sunset—blood-red it was—and the seas were like blood about us. And the great cry when the ship went down ; and the crying of the wind that night, as we sailed away. How the wind cries ! ”

I saw the sweat again upon him. I saw his brows wet, and his wet hands stained with the red gems. He gasped, “ I've never thought to die ! . . . Ah, Christ, that I rot in the ground and end so ! . . . But to blow with the winds about the world, forever about the world—knowing no rest—no rest ! ”

I rose and held his glass to his lips. He drank, and for the time his courage and strength were restored to him ; he gibed and mocked the crying wind, the voices that were about the house, in the house ; surely now I heard sounds from below, laughter, and roaring chorus of drunken voices. No one yet sought admission to the room.

Now leaning forward, plucking at my sleeve, he whispered, "You've been wondering why I kept you here this night?"

"Surely because you loved my father, and would have me by you! Will you not lie down on your bed and rest?"

"No! No! But to show you—give you—what's mine, what's to be yours. Help me up! I'm weak! I fear the pain. Bring a light, boy!"

Wondering, I gave him my arm, and propped by me he made his way from the hearth to the wall beyond his chair. I saw him clutch at the tapestry and tear it aside; the cloud of dust nigh blinded me. Drawing from my support, he tapped and clawed at the old oaken panels; they parted suddenly, revealing a deep recess in the stones of the wall. Leaning against me, he fumbled at his breast, and took forth two slim keys on a silken ribbon strung about his neck, and groped in the recess, muttering, "The light, boy! Show the light!"

And while I held the candle, I saw in the recess a little iron door built into the stone; he set a key at last in the lock, and opening the door drew out a black box. This box was deep, but of no great length; it was heavy, for he nigh dropped it when he pulled it out; he clutched it to his breast and bore it to his chair with him. He

cried to me, "Pull the curtain back. Hide the panels! Come and see!"

He sat with the black box resting on his knees; it seemed of ebony, and was bound plainly with silver. He set the key in the lock, and lifted the lid. Leaning over him, I saw that the contents of the box were packed in black silk. At his word, I aided him to lift this package out, and set the box down at his feet. The silk reeked with spices; with clawing fingers he unfolded the wrapper of silk, till it draped about his knees to the hearth—a flag of black silk it seemed, wrought with a design in silver thread and ringed with silver. And suddenly the grim thing shrouded in this black silken flag, brodered with the death's head and cross bones, lay bare to me; for he gripped between his palms a white skull. Now this skull was fashioned into the form of a casket overwrought with silver, having a silver lid upon the crown, and in the sockets of the eyes two blue jewels burning to the reflection of the candles and the fire with an unholy light. The jaws were banded with silver, so that the skull resting on his palms, grinned at me, as shuddering I drew back, and dared not look upon the old man's face and feared his laughter. Lowering the skull upon his knees, he touched the silver crown of it with his

fingers ; the lid flew up ; and instantly, at the wonder of it, I cried out, for it seemed that fire burned from the casket—a miracle of light and colour, as the flame upon the hearth and from the candles gave life to the gems within. My grandfather's fingers seemed to dip in fire. He laughed to himself ; he drew out wonderful gems ; held them gorgeous and glowing on his palms ; he let them fall back into the skull.

He muttered, “ Only a little store, only a little store,—and yet half the years of my sinning, child, are told in this odd little box. I had it fashioned to my fancy ; they're rare gems for its eyes. D'ye understand what's hid in it ? D'ye understand there's not a man but would sell his soul for what's in this little box ? D'ye see this white stone—this big white stone ? Did ever the moon or the sun shine like it ? Was ever blood so red as this red stone, or leaf so green as this, or ever the Main so blue ? Ay, there's diamonds, there's rubies, emeralds and sapphires ; and there's wonderful pearls. And thirty years and odd went to fill this box. Gold and plate, and many a precious thing that was scarce safe to sell—ivory and silks and spices—ay, they're all told in the stones of this little box. There's been blood on these stones—many of 'em. They've been plucked from white necks and dead fingers—

ay, many of them ! Charles has lost his soul for the bare tell of 'em. All my rogues are lost for the lust of 'em—Barwise and Thrale and the rest. Knowing I held my hoard—though where 'twas hid no one knew, and feared to seek, and feared to murder me, lest where 'twas hid should never be known. Ay—What's that ? ”

“ Knocking upon the door ! ” I whispered, shuddering.

He closed and hid his terrible casket in the black flag, and thrust the bundle back into the box. He muttered to me, “ For you ! D'ye hear me ? For my son's son ! Set the box back ; keep ye the keys ”—and thrust box and keys into my hands, and whispered, “ Haste ! Haste ! Quiet as you go. They're out there—mayhap all of 'em ! ”

Loud and insistent the knocking sounded, as I sped across the room to set the box back ; close the panel, and draw the hangings into place once more.

MY grandfather asking, "What hour is it?" stretched out his hand to a press beside him and drew forth a pistol, and set this by him on the arm of his chair.

"Midnight!" I answered, glancing at the clock.

"Bradbury should have returned," he said. "Go to the door, lad, and ask who knocks."

I hurried to the door, and to my question "Who's there?" my Uncle Charles replied, "I, to be sure, nephew. Pray open the door!"

"Let him come in," my grandfather said. "I bade him keep away. Yet let him in."

I drew the bar and opened the door, and instantly was thrust aside. There entered, indeed, my uncle; there entered with him Blunt, Thrale, Mistress Barwise and her man and sons; and at their heels there came a surging crew, striving so one to precede the other that they blocked the doorway momentarily; cursing, struggling, contending, they came on,—all the old rogues of Rogues' Haven, and with them seamen

of Blunt's crew. Fired with drink, disorderly they came, with clatter of shoes, roar of voices, sounding above the very wind ; all so intent upon their purpose—all so covetous for plunder, that though they flung me back against the wall, they passed me by. I realised that Oliver was by me ; that his hands gripped my arms, and pulled me back, when I would have struggled to reach my grandfather ; he was growling thickly, "Get away ! Now's your chance ! Get away ! They're mad with drink. God knows what they'll do."

"I'll stay here," cried I. "Don't hold me, Oliver ! What of Miss Milne ? "

"Locked in her room or fled the house. I've not heard or seen her. They've been looting. Get away ! "

I shook my head ; his strong hands held me back against the wall ; I must stand and watch, nor bear a hand to aid my grandfather. He needed none, for though they burst in with a rush after my uncle, they paused, and fell to silence, seeing the old man sitting grimly in his chair. Charles, slipping from them, held himself behind his father's chair ; the rogues crowding about the hearth approached no nearer.

My grandfather roared out in so full and strong a tone that for the shock of it they fell back from

him, "What in the devil's name is this? Have ye gone mad? Why d'ye come bursting into my room in the dead of night? Speak, some of ye! Charles, what is this?"

"I do assure you," said my uncle clearly, "I have no part in this."

"No part," the woman Barwise jeered. "Ay, then, no share in what we've come for, and what we'll surely have." She thrust herself forward, her face enflamed; she pointed her skinny hand at my grandfather and cried:

"D'ye hear me? What we're going to have! What we've waited for too long. What you took when you was pirate, and sunk English ships, and murdered—what you stole!"

He broke out with a bellow of anger, "Mutiny, hey? Mutiny! Thinking me dead or dying. Thinking now you'll take what you never had the courage to take—ay, and you've all grown old waiting for. Mutiny! Hey, you dogs? Mark me, you dogs—am I broken? Am I broken yet?"

And then it seemed that the will of the man triumphed over the wreck of his body. Watching him from the wall, I saw him rise up from his chair, his hand gripping his pistol; I saw his eyes blaze and his face take colour; I saw the old rogues cower and break before him,—only the Barwise sons and the men who had never sailed

with him yet held their ground ; and Blunt watched unfaltering. He laughed upon them trembling before him ; he pointed his pistol at Thrale, and the fellow quivered like a leaf, and seemed the palsied dotard, while the master was yet strong.

“ Hey, Thrale,” my grandfather mocked him, “ you were bold with drink when you came in ; but you never had the heart of a man. You’d slit a throat in the dark ; you’d no stomach for a red deck, and you’d vomit at the smoke of powder—rogue ! Hey, Barwise,—hey, your woman took you, for you’d not the heart to refuse her. Ay, you’re drunk now, and you thought you were brave, but you sweat for terror. Mistress, you were a bold wench once, and you did many things in your thieves’ kitchen at Shadwell a man would shudder for the very thought of. Hey, you rogues, mutiny is it ? Mutiny ? You’d rob me—murder me—thinking me sick and weak ? D’ye mind a night off Malabar ? Roger Quirk it was—he’d a mind to be master of my ship. And he came sneaking into my cabin in the night, thinking to find me sleeping, and some of you were shuddering in the dark at his back, and ready to call him captain, and sail under him, if so be he murdered me. But Roger Quirk died ; at midnight he died, and

it's midnight now. Hey, Roger Quirk led you then ; who leads you now ? ”

They answered nothing ; Charles leaned indolently against his father's chair. My grandfather grinned at the cowering rogues ; he pointed at Mistress Barwise, “ Is it old Bess Barwise ? D'ye shelter behind her skirts ? Blunt—you, why the devil do you break into my house in the night ? Answer me ! ”

But Mr. Blunt met him boldly, “ I'm no servant of yours, Craike,” he said. “ I've no cause to fear you. Nor have I ever feared.”

“ Ay, you were cabin-boy on my last cruise, and profited by it.”

“ And kept my eyes and ears open. And know what you put away. More, I've a right to come into the house when I will, and I've come. You've profited by me. Your son's profited. Your cellars are stocked with my cargoes. I'll not go out of this house to-night till I have what I've come for. Where's the loot ? That's what you'll hand over to us before we go to-night ”—and suddenly swung round, and called to his seamen, “ Where's the boy ? ”

The seamen were upon me instantly ; Oliver was thrust aside, cursing most foully. Two fellows gripped me and dragged me forward, ranging me a prisoner before my grandfather and

Blunt. Said Blunt coolly, "Here's one who'll make you speak. Hark'ee, Craike, you tell us where the loot is, or the lad'll suffer for it. Have you told him, Craike, where it's hid? Have you? Then, by the Lord, he'll tell us!"

"Loose the boy!" my grandfather said, quietly, "Hands off the boy!"

"Not till you say where the stuff's hid. He'll go down to my ship to-night, except you speak. D'ye hear me, Craike?"

My grandfather's right hand shot up suddenly from the fold of his gown. His pistol blazed; I heard Blunt scream; I saw him fall and writhe, and struggle on the floor. My grandfather was roaring, "Loose the boy! Loose him!"—and as the seamen recoiled before him, his hand had dragged me from them, and pulled me in beside him. And a great cry arose among them all; and silence fell as suddenly—silence save for the crying of the winds about the house. I snatched my pistol from my tail-pocket and thrust it into his hand; he advanced slowly, and they fell back from him; he towered above them—a man above wolves. I could picture him so upon the deck of his own ship in battle or in storm, or mutineers so cowering before him; peril could be of no account to such a man—no, though he knew himself upon the shores of the eternal

sea ; though all the night seemed burthened with his sins ; though his enemies were all about him, menacing in the house, or risen from the sea, he blenched in no way. The huge figure, the face suffused, the eyes aflame, the head thrown proudly back, the mocking laughter on his lips.

He cried to them, " Would you threaten me, rogues ? Would you come like carrion crows about a dying beast ? Think you that I am dying—think you ? Hey, but I've whipped you many's the time, when you've thought to put me from command of my ship, and set another in my place ! Hey, and men have died, and backs have run red—hey, and I've won ; always I've won ! Blunt would have robbed me ! Take your man ! You ! You !"—pointing to two fellows of Blunt's crew. " Pick him up and take him out of here. D'ye hear me ?"—the pistol quivering in his grasp.

The seamen cowered ; bent low, took up Blunt's body, and so bore him forth—their shipmates slouching after. I heard the muttering of their voices and the clatter of their shoes sound away down the corridor. Mistress Barwise and the old rogues would have scuttled after, but my grandfather roared out, " Stay ! I've words for your ears—for you who have robbed me. Stay ! "

Shuddering, pale-faced, the rogues stood eyeing him,—the old brown men peering like so many ghosts from the dark by the door, the dying candles casting only a dim light, the leaping flame reflected in the puddle of blood where Blunt had lain. My grandfather faced them still, laughing upon them. The wind came rolling up, and struck the house ; the crying of the wind was as the crying of many voices ; the rushing of the wind as the onrush of the sea. He ceased to laugh ; staring at him, while my uncle, white to the lips and wide-eyed, watched him from the hearth, I saw him stagger. The pistols dropped from his hands. He fell with a crash across the hearth.

MY uncle, rushing forward, dropped on his knees beside him, and lifted up his head. I took the glass from the press, and poured a little of the spirit into it, and handed this to my uncle, who moistened my grandfather's lips with it, and sought to dribble a few drops down his throat. And nearer, nearer yet, crept the rogues ; recoiling from the living, they feared him still, lest even now he should arise, and his voice send them scurrying as so little a while before. But he lay still,—his eyes open and glassy ; his lips parted. My uncle lowered his head to the floor, and rising, said, “ I think him dead ”—but with no tremor in his voice or hint of sorrow or compassion.

And instantly the woman Barwise laughed horribly, and screamed, “ Dead, and we've naught to fear ! ”—and pointing her hand at me, “ What now, Mr. John—what now ? ”

My uncle, in a harsh voice cried out, “ Be silent, woman ! Respect the dead ! Out of the room, all of you ! ”

She answered with defiance, "Not now! While he was livin', we couldn't have what we're here for. And I for one stays here, and don't stir for you; that's what I say, and that's what ye all say, if ye're men." Whereat her sons thrust their way forward, and the old men piped shrilly, "Ay, ay, that's what we all say. Ay, ay!"

My uncle said disdainfully, "I can tell you only that, if you think to find treasure in the house, you deceive yourselves grievously. Do you think that my father was such a fool as to hoard money or jewels in this house with such a company as you about him? I promise you that all he had was long since converted into East India stock and the like; he kept nothing by him."

"But that's a lie!" Thrale piped. "He had treasure by him. Many's the time he's been laughing to himself for thinking that we who'd fought and bled, and risked the sea and the shot and the rope, sought our share of it, and never took a dollar of it. I've been minded to stick this knife into him many a time!"—and his skeleton-hand showed a lean, glittering blade, "Oh, and I come in one day and he don't hear me, and he has a box and a death's head, and 'tis all on fire with baubles. All aflame! What's come of 'em, Mr. Charles, what's come of 'em?"

“ I tell you—— ” my uncle began ; but their yell of derision silenced him ; a wicked ring of faces was about us : old faces stained with all the sins, old eyes bright for the lust of treasure, old hands clutching and covetous ; their voices sounding as the cawing of crows ; like carrion crows they flapped about us, and the dead man lying stretched across the hearth. The tall Barwise sons watched them, grinning and muttering between themselves. Four of Blunt’s men had sneaked back into the room.

My uncle, smiling contemptuously upon the rogues, asked quietly, “ Do you know anything of this, nephew ? ”

I answered steadily, “ Nothing ! Nothing ! ”—but must have flushed for my lie ; the woman Barwise cried out instantly, “ He’s lying ! He’s lying ! look at him,—all red-faced now, when he was sick and white afore ”—and rushing on me, clawing at my jacket, “ Where’s it hid ? You know ! Where’s it hid ? ”

But instantly my uncle intervened—concerned now for my knowledge, and by the dread that all these rogues should share the secret. He ordered her, “ Stand back, woman ! Do you hear me ? Stand back ! ” in so threatening a tone that she recoiled and loosed me.

My uncle, gripping me by the shoulder, drew

me beside him ; I had taken up the pistols fallen from his father's hands ; now we stood with our backs against the chimney-piece, and my grandfather's body lay between us and the rogues. Oliver came shouldering his way among them to our side, a hunting crop clutched in his hand. Mistress Barwise, as beside herself, screamed out a curse at us, and shook her fist, so inciting them that in a sullen surge they were sweeping forward, when my uncle, livid with rage, cried out, " Back, you fools,—back ! Do you know this, that while you waste your time here, Bradbury returns, with Gavin Masters and his folk, who've sworn to smoke us out of this hold ? Do you know this and palter ? "

" Ay, then stand aside," retorted Mistress Barwise, " and let us have the handling of the lad there. He knows for sure, and we have the means to make him talk "—and pointed to the fire. " He'll speak for the burning of his bare flesh. He'll speak, if he knows to keep his mouth shut now, means to keep it shut come Judgment Day ! "

" You'll not lay hands upon him ! " said my uncle, as I made play with the loaded pistol. " Give me a word with him alone ! All of you out of the room now ! Let me but reason with him ! "

“ And plot to rob us ! ” Thrale squeaked.

“ Nay, nay ! ” my uncle protested, smiling.

The Barwise woman, swinging round, muttered and whispered with old Thrale ; turning back to us presently to say, “ We’ll go—but only outside the door. But we’ll keep the key, lest you think to lock us out.” Oliver had drawn away from the hearth to the wall.

“ Surely take the key, Barwise,” said my uncle. “ But a few words with my nephew, and you’ll know whether he will confide in me or no. And if he prove intractable, I promise you that I’ll hand him over to you for discipline”—I believed that the gentleman found himself at a loss to prevent their participation in my secret.

“ Out of the room, then, all of you,” she ordered them, and drove them before her like so many hens ; they protested with many oaths ; she screaming at them in kind so berated them that they were out at last. She paused by the door to take the key from the lock. Of a sudden Oliver leaped forward and thrust her after them ; banged the door with a crash, and turned the key. Her cry of rage was shrill as the wind itself ; she plunged against the door and beat upon it like a madwoman, screaming out, “ Break it down ! Break it down ! They’re tricking us ! ”

Oliver set the bar in its place, and turned back to us grinning.

My uncle smiled his approval, "I never gave you credit for any wit," he said; "I offer you apology. I confess I was at a loss,—I thank you for having given me the opportunity of a little talk with my nephew. Be sure of the bar, Oliver; the door will hold them out, I trust, till Bradbury returns."

Oliver, coming back to the hearth, growled, "Help me first to lift the old man. Is he to lie here longer in this blood?"

"Nay, nay," said my uncle hastily; and among us, we lifted my grandfather's body and laid it upon the bed, and drew the curtains; all the while the clamour at the door continued; the winds yet beat upon the house. My uncle, returning to the fireside, sat down in his father's chair—for all the raging of the rogues without seeming as indolent and unruffled as in the harbour.

"Nephew," he said, "I would our conversation could have been conducted with proper privacy. Oliver, oblige me by withdrawing to the door."

Oliver answered boldly, "I stay here!"

"You heard me, Oliver!"

"I heard you, sir! And you have never heard

me ere this night. By God, sir, you should have taught me by now to be ashamed at nothing ; yet—yet—to know the part that you have played this night,—you to have raised these rogues against my cousin and the old man there ! ”

My uncle smiling, though his brow grew black, cried out, “ If I’d my cane, sir, I’d discipline you now. Are you drunk yet from dinner ? Or do you think to win your cousin’s patronage at my expense ? You think him heir to Craike and all my father had. I having nothing, you range yourself beside him ! ”

“ I am ashamed,” said Oliver, regarding him with dark and lowering look. “ By God, sir, I’ve been silent long enough. I’ll endure no more. Now this I’ll say to my cousin—if he’ll believe me ; if he’ll think I have no motive but to be his friend, and save my father from fresh roguery and shame—I stand beside him.”

“ When the door goes down, my good fellow, as presently it will,” my uncle sneered, “ they’ll have your life and his.”

Oliver stretched out his hand to me ; I gripped it ; side by side we faced my uncle.

He said, “ I have no time to bandy words with you, my son. I say this to you, John, that the Barwise sons are pledged to me, and will obey me, and Blunt’s men also will obey me !

It is my condition only that you tell me where my father's hoard is hid ; for clearly he revealed it to you while you were with him ; and that the agreement between us be, that we shall share this treasure. It's hid in the house,—I assume in this very room."

" And you assume," I said, " my grandfather revealed it to me. You assume too much, sir."

" Dear lad, your very face reveals your knowledge to me. Come, write, sign—there are pens and paper in the press there ! "

" I answer this," I said ; " whatever come or have come to me from my grandfather, you shall not share. You would have had me kidnapped and shipped out of England. You have ever been an enemy to mine and me. What of my father ? "

" Nephew," he said, " hark to the pack outside the door ! "

He rose ; his look surveyed the room—the hangings were waving in the draught. He pointed suddenly to the tapestry drawn yet a little aside from the sliding panel ; and at my start and confusion he laughed triumphantly, and strode forward. I lost my head ; I sought to interpose ; he thrust me from him, and rushing to the wall drew back the hangings. All this while the rogues without battered upon the door ;

I heard it groan and split, and knew that it was going down before their blows.

My uncle's fingers strayed over the panels ; touched the spring ; the panels parted. He cried out gaily, " Oh, 'tis here, nephew—'tis here ! And I asked but a half, nephew,—what now ? What now ? "

" Would you steal ? " Oliver growled. " Are you thief ? "

He answered, snarling, " Ah, God, what I've endured these years, and now this boy would rob me. I'll have what's mine. I care not how you fare, nephew—whether they do you to death, or drag you aboard the *Black Wasp*—I care not. I'll have what's mine, and be away ere Bradbury comes !"—and thrust the panels back, and fumbled with the lock, but could make nothing of it.

I laughed at him. " My uncle," cried I, " it's for me to dictate terms. Your interest with these rogues for me, and I'll make you rich ; but the secret of the lock I'll keep ! "

He whirled round upon me, his mask off, his face malignant, his lips snarling. He let the tapestry fall before the hollow in the wall. He pointed to the door. It had parted asunder, the wreckage fell against the bar.



MRS. BARWISE headed them still—Lord, what a strength must have been hers in youth ; even now her withered hands tore at the wreckage of the door. Her sons and she had cleared a way presently ; the bar was drawn, and all the rogues were in the room once more. But, setting my back against the chimney-piece, with Oliver beside me, I levelled my pistol as they came on, menacing, and I cried out, “ Keep back ! You’ll not lay hands on me. Back, I say ! ”

At this Mrs. Barwise checked her onrush ; and whirled round towards my uncle stepping back from the wall. The rogues at her back halted and peered at us, muttering among themselves ; Nick and Isaac Barwise and Blunt’s men yet held apart. The woman demanded furiously of my uncle, “ Well ? Well ? What’s the answer ? You’ve not tricked us after all, d’ye see ? D’ye see ? What’s his answer ? ”

He said coolly, “ I’ve no answer for you. Ask him ! ”

As she swung round and faced me, I said, as

bravely as I might, though shaking still for terror of them, "My answer is that there's no treasure. Ay, and were there treasure, every gold piece or jewel of it would belong to me, even as, now my grandfather is dead, this house belongs to me. And I say to you you'd best be packing while you may. You there from the *Black Wasp*, d'ye know that while you're paltering here your ship's cut out? D'ye know the King's men are aboard her?"

"Bold words, but lies!" cried Mistress Barwise.

"No! For but yesterday I was with old Sir Gavin, who's sworn to put an end to smuggling on the coast here. Your ship was never to put to sea. Not Blunt himself would have got her from the teeth of the King's ship. Would you be taken here?"

The four seamen muttered among themselves; I saw them drawing to the doorway—scuttling out; only the old rogues and the Barwise sons yet held their ground, and Mrs. Barwise sought still to enflame them to her purpose.

"Words—ay, but we've not come for words from you, master," she burst out. "Where's the baubles, master? Where's the gold? Our baubles and our gold!"

"Ay, ay, ours! That's what we're here to

know ! Where's the stuff hid ?"—came the chorus.

I faced them still,—Oliver with his swinging whip beside me. I said, "Keep back ! I've a word for you, as a word for Blunt's men. I tell you Mr. Bradbury comes this night, with his men, and Sir Gavin's folk, and all the gentry round. He comes to make an end here—to sweep this house clean—for me ! You've threatened murder ; you've robbed and broken ; you've set every man of you his neck in reach of a rope to-night ; I warn you all, for you served my grandfather, that soon, perhaps now, the house must be surrounded. You've escaped hanging so long, how d'ye like the prospect of swinging at the end of a rope at the end of your days ? Take what you've looted—plate and what not ?—and go ! You'll take no more. There is no treasure !"

"Lies !" screamed the woman, as they quailed and wavered. "Where's the blunt first ? Don't go till you've laid hands on what's your own."

"Go now !" I shouted, to be heard above the instant uproar. "Go now before it is too late !"

As they wavered, she shrieked out, "Pull him down ! Take him and hold him but the moment, and I'll have the truth out of him—with the irons and the fire !"

They surged forward, but before my levelled pistol and Oliver's uplifted hunting crop, they wavered still ; having each and every man of them so little left of life, and valuing it at a price above visionary treasure. My uncle, leaning unconcerned against his father's chair, neither incited them nor assisted us ; Nick and Isaac Barwise seemed to await their orders from him, yet holding themselves apart from the old rogues.

And suddenly I saw Mr. Bradbury standing within the doorway, his hair all blown with the wind—else, as cool and unperturbed as ever I had known him ; seeing him come in, with Galt and the two runners at his back, I cried out triumphantly, “ Too late ! Too late ! ”

Mistress Barwise uttered a shrill scream, and rushed back among the rogues ; they broke, fell back ; scuttled like rats about the room ; seeking the door, and finding Roger and the runners standing grimly before it, they huddled together against the wall. Mr. Bradbury, stepping forward, demanded swiftly, “ What is this ? Where is Mr. Craike ? ”

I pointed to the bed, “ My grandfather lies there,” I said. “ He died an hour since, sir—died while he faced these rogues. What now ? ”

Mr. Bradbury whispered, “ Sir Gavin waits

below ! We hold the hall-door and the stair. We come well-armed,—we're none too many."

"And these rogues !"

"Bid them go ! If they go quietly, so much the better for us, so much the less scandal. We're not so many that they may not pass,—unless you'd hold them here ! Yet bid them go ! We're not too many !"

I faced them then ; I cried out, to be heard above a gust of the falling wind, " You've yet a chance to get away. Go now—all of you—out of this house ! You served my grandfather, and for that I've no mind to punish you for what you've done this night. Take what's your own—no more, and be away from this house within an hour. D'ye hear me ? Go !"

Galt and the runners stood aside at a wave of Mr. Bradbury's hand. Like a flight of carrion crows the rogues sped from the room ; save only Mistress Barwise, and she, her eyes blazing, her mouth spitting curses, her hands clawing the air, as she backed from the room, wore rather the aspect of an aged cat than of a carrion crow. Pell-mell they fled, as swiftly as their withered shanks would bear them ; clattered along the corridor, and were gone.

So there were left in the room with the dead only Mr. Bradbury and his men, my kinsfolk and

myself. My uncle, lounging in his father's chair, with a poor assumption of his old effrontery, asked of Mr. Bradbury, "By what authority, pray tell me, does this lad ape the master of the house? As heir to Craike?"

"I shall leave the question unanswered, Charles," said Mr. Bradbury gravely, motioning towards the bed. "This is neither the time nor the place."

"By what authority?" my uncle repeated, his eyes suddenly alight.

"Surely as your elder brother's son," said Mr. Bradbury. "My honoured and lamented client's will—signed by his hand this night—and taken by me from this house and lodged in safety, will be produced and read by me in due course."

"By what authority?" cried my uncle, with bitter anger. "Answer my question, Bradbury!"

"Till I read this will, and divulge its provisions to you," said Mr. Bradbury steadily, "may I say that Mr. John Craike must enjoy in this house an authority not inferior to your own? By no means inferior, my dear sir!"

But ere my uncle might retort, there came a sound of scuffling from the door—a shrill scream—one of the runners growling, "You'll not go in, mistress—I tell you you'll not go in!"

And the shrill voice piping, "I'll see Mr. Charles, I will see Mr. Charles!"—with a string of oaths ending in choking, coughing; surely 'twas Mother Mag.

My uncle rose from his chair, and demanded angrily, "What's this to-do? What does the woman want? Let her come in!"

"Let her come in!" repeated Mr. Bradbury; and, while I stared, Mother Mag, escaping from the runner, was in the room. She stood there, bent nigh double, her skinny hands clawing at her shawl; she said no word, but spying Charles, crept forward to him.

"What is it, woman?" Mr. Bradbury asked, sharply; she blinked still at Charles, muttering, "I've a word for Mr. Craike—no more!"

"Speak!" said my uncle, indifferently.

"Martin would have me come!" croaked she. "Martin would have me come every step o' the way, though it's a weary, weary way, and the devil's loose to-night. With a word for Mr. Charles."

"Speak!" cried my uncle again.

"No more than this—no more: 'Adam Baynes' come home again!' Adam Baynes——!"

But I recalled the words of Roger Galt as he bore me away from the Stone House, that Adam Baynes, this woman's son, had been

transported overseas and had died ; and I wondered that, if the man lived and Roger had lied, the woman showed no joy in her son's return—surely he had escaped—but only terror ; that, shuddering and shaking, she stood blinking at my uncle, and muttering to herself, clutching her blue shawl about her throat, and sweeping her wind-blown hair from her face.

Mr. Bradbury cried out sharply, “ What is the meaning of all this, Charles ? Who is this Adam Baynes ? What concern is it of yours ? ”

“ He is this woman's son,” my uncle answered, seeming to strive for mastery of himself. “ He was a servant of this house—once ; that is all ! Well, mistress, well ? You've brought your grandson's message. Tell Martin Baynes he'll hear from me ! That is all ! Go now ! I've other concerns.”

She peered at him ; muttered to herself ; and tottered towards the door. Mr. Bradbury started forward as though to stay her ; instantly my uncle intervened, protesting, “ Let the woman go, Bradbury. She's of no concern to you or me.”

While Mr. Bradbury hesitated, the woman slipped past the runners, and was gone ; my uncle turned back to the fire, and again sat down in his father's chair. I watched him, wondering

at the terror on his face, his twisting lips, his flickering eyes—at what new dread was borne upon him by the woman's words, "Adam Baynes' come home again!"

Roger Galt was growling from the doorway. "Who's Adam Baynes? Mother Mag's son never went overseas, after all. Mother Mag's son stayed here and died from a pistol-ball in the breast!"

Mr. Bradbury, turning back to my uncle, cried out sharply, "Who's this fellow, Charles? Why should this woman bring word to you? Who should come from overseas, that you should fear, and shudder so?"

My uncle answering nothing, Mr. Bradbury called out sharply to the runners, "Hold that woman! Don't let her leave the house. Hold her! There's more in this."

But though we started to the door, and Roger and the runners went scurrying down the corridor, Mother Mag had vanished like a ghost in the darkness of the house.

THE [illegible] OF [illegible]

BY [illegible]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

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Chapter XXXV. Departure of Mr. Charles Craike

WE went out presently to descend the stairs in search of Sir Gavin Masters and his men. My uncle strode out ahead of us, Oliver slipped away ; I held Mr. Bradbury's arm as he would have hurried off, to direct search for Mother Mag, and to insure that if Mistress Barwise and the rogues left the house, they did not bear their plunder of plate away with them. I whispered to him, " There's in the room—in the wall there—a box—stuffed with gems. My grandfather revealed them to me, ere he died. My uncle knows of them ; he sought to rob me of them. I'll not trust them here ! "

" Ay, ay," said Mr. Bradbury, " I had some notion of them,—by the old man's talk this night. Where are they hid ? "

I dragged the hangings back. I took the key, unlocked the iron door, and drew the box out of its hiding place. " Pray take my pistol, sir," said I. " The box is heavy—bursting with the jewels in it. I've never looked upon such

jewels—like fire ! My uncle will not rest till he's laid hands on them."

Mr. Bradbury took my pistol ; he paused an instant to pull back the curtains from the bed, and reverently draw the coverlet over the old man's body. Blowing out all the candles then, save one to light us down the stair, he went before me from the room, pausing to lock the door upon the dead ; and cried out to Roger and the runners, still searching for old Mag along the corridors, to go with us down the stairs. As we descended, I heard voices muttering in the hall ; and saw the gleam of lanterns, and made out it might be half-a-dozen stout fellows. I saw, as we passed by them, that every man was armed with cutlass, pistol or bludgeon. Sir Gavin Masters, emerging from the doorway, cried out jovially, " Ah, John Craike ! So your throat's not cut yet, and ye're not kidnapped. Where's the old man, Bradbury ? The devil of a time you've been ! "

" Pray step with us into the dining-room, Sir Gavin," said Mr. Bradbury. " Old Mr. Craike is dead—an hour or more since ! "

" Murdered ! " the justice roared.

" Nay, nay—though there's been wild doings here this night," said Mr. Bradbury. " The rats are scuttling all about the house."

“ Ay, I’ve heard them scurrying, squeaking. Have we men enough with us to trap ’em, Bradbury ? ”

“ I think not—no ! ” said Mr. Bradbury hastily. “ Pray, sir, come with us. Bid your men keep on guard still, and let no one enter ! Come, sir, come ! ”

But I hung back and called out, “ Sir Gavin—Mr. Bradbury, there’s the girl—my uncle’s ward, Miss Milne ! What’s chanced to her I fear to think.”

“ Oh, the maid,” Sir Gavin answered, laughing. “ She’s safe enough. ’Twas she opened the door for us, when we were thinking to break it down. She’s safe. She’s in the room here ! ”

Thus reassured, I passed with them into the dining-room. Lord, the reek of drink, and the disorder of it !—the presses open and broken, for the plate they held ; the shattered glass and crystal on floor and table ; bottles from the broached cellars. The silver candlesticks were gone from the chimney-piece ; the mirrors starred or shivered wholly ; the tapestries rent from the wall ; the pictures torn down, as if the rogues had searched even behind them for any sign of treasure. By the hearth, where a few coals blackened, Evelyn Milne was sitting ; the candle borne by Mr. Bradbury showed me how

deathly pale she was, her hair blown all about her shoulders, her eyes feverish yet from terror and lack of sleep. She started up, as we came in ; I set the box down on the table, and took her hands, and cried out, " Miss Milne ! Thank God, you're safe ! "

" Ay, ay, and have served us well this night," Mr. Bradbury declared ; and Sir Gavin added gallantly, " Upon my soul she has ! "

She smiled, and drew her hands from mine ; looking at Mr. Bradbury, she asked, " Would you have me go, sir ? Would you be alone ? "

" Nay, nay," said he, hastily. " Stay here, my dear ! The house is not yet safe for you. Stay here ! "

She bowed and returned to her seat. Mr. Bradbury, setting down the candle by the box, drew up a chair to the table, and dropping wearily into it, said, " Sir Gavin, with the few fellows you've been able to bring here, it's well that we remain here till the dawn ; it cannot be far off."

" Ay, but all these rogues ? " the justice grumbled. " Not a rat among them have we trapped. I thought to take the nest full of them. What's chanced to the old man ? What passed to-night ere we came, young John ? Where's the villain, Charles ? "

“We’ll have the tale from Mr. John Craike later,” said Mr. Bradbury impatiently. “Old Mr. Craike was near to death when I left him, and he died to-night. I know not whether Charles Craike is yet in the house, or whether he’s gone sneaking away, as I take it all the old rogues have by now. Nay, Sir Gavin, I am troubled more by the coming of the woman Baynes but now, and the word she brought Charles Craike from the Stone House, and the effect of her tidings on him ! ”

“What of the hag ? ” Sir Gavin muttered. “What’s all this, Bradbury ? ”

“She brought this message from Martin Baynes : ‘ Adam Baynes ’ come home again ! ’—and Charles went grey with terror.”

“Adam Baynes ! Old Mag’s son,” said the justice. “Shipped overseas ten years or so since, with Captain Phillip from Portsmouth for Botany Bay. How should the rogue have ever come back from New South Wales ? He went overseas for life.”

Mr. Bradbury rose swiftly, and, hurrying to the door, called, “Roger Galt ! Come here ! And bring a lantern ! We need more light.”

Roger Galt came slowly and unwillingly into the room, and stood blinking before us, watching Sir Gavin apprehensively.

"You dog!" growled the justice. "I've sworn to clap you in gaol till you're hanged. But for this night's work——"

"For this night's work, Sir Gavin would tell you, Galt," Mr. Bradbury interrupted with impatience, "that all will be forgotten. Don't interrupt me, pray, Sir Gavin—that is your meaning. Galt, a while since you said that Adam Baynes was never shipped overseas; that actually he remained in England; and that he died from a bullet in some highway robbery."

"That's so, master," Roger muttered, glancing round at the door, as if prepared to break away from the justice and possible custody at any moment.

"What more do you know of this, Galt?" Mr. Bradbury persisted. "How should this rogue, sentenced to transportation, have been free in England? Did he escape and return, or did he never sail?"

"He never sailed," vowed Roger. "Guineas went to get him out of the hands of them as was taking him to Portsmouth to put him aboard."

"He escaped, and no search was ever made for him?" cried Mr. Bradbury. "Do you expect us to believe that, Roger Galt? Why, man, it's unbelievable!"

Galt muttered, "I've heard tell—Mother Mag's

cackled over it when in drink—another was put aboard in his place ; another went overseas as Adam Baynes—someone they wanted to get out of England.”

“How long,” asked Mr. Bradbury, “since Captain Phillip sailed ? ”

“Ten years since, to my thinking,” the justice answered reflectively.

“Ten years since ! ” repeated Mr. Bradbury ; and, as understanding of his theory came upon me, I gasped, and stared wildly at him,—he cried out sharply, “Sir Gavin ! Bid a couple of fellows go with my men from Bow Street, and seek Charles Craike. His rooms are immediately above us ! Bid them seek him there, and, if he have not fled yet, bring him here ! That will do, Galt. Go ! ”

I caught at Mr. Bradbury’s arm, and would have sought an answer of him to my thoughts and terrors ; he did not heed me, but, speaking swiftly and with agitation growing upon him, he burst out, “Sir Gavin, at whatever risk of falling in with Blunt’s men, and being worsted by them and the rogues of this place and the Stone House—for surely they’ve all gone scurrying for the Stone House this night—we must ride for the Stone House. I’ve sent for Charles Craike here, to question him ; for surely he’ll lie to us—and to

delay him, if he think to go thither this night. For, ten years since, Mr. Richard Craike disappeared from home and wife and son in London ; and for ten years has not been heard of. If, Sir Gavin, it should be—it is the wildest fancy—that Richard Craike went overseas in place of Adam Baynes ? If this should be—— ? ”

“ Bradbury—surely ! ” gasped Sir Gavin. “ It could not be ! ”

“ Ay, ay ; but if it should be, and if Richard Craike’s escaped—come home to England ; if Richard Craike was on his road to Craike House yesterday ; and Martin Baynes, Blunt’s men—came upon him ? For, surely, Richard Craike coming home, and seeking wife and son in London, and finding no trace of them, would hurry hither. And if Richard Craike’s again in the hands of his enemies at the Stone House ? ”

“ If ! If ! ” cried the justice. “ The maddest of fancies, Bradbury ! ”

“ No ! For the woman comes in the night to Charles Craike. And the woman says ‘ Adam Baynes’ come home again ! ’ And Charles Craike—looks like death—at the very words ! ”

“ I would,” growled Sir Gavin, “ that I’d more men with me. It’s damnably unfortunate, Bradbury, that the coastguard should be held to the shore to-night, while that young whipper-

snapper of a lieutenant—Abbott—seeks to cut out Blunt's brig in the dark."

"Whatever be the peril," Mr. Bradbury declared, "we needs must ride for the Stone House this night. For I tell you that, if this be Richard Craike, and he be in the hands of Martin Baynes and the rogues whom we've beaten at their game to-night, he is in peril—peril of death."

"Ay, but you'll hear Charles—if he's not gone," Sir Gavin muttered, rising. "I hear them coming down the stair."

My uncle had not fled the house, but he was dressed for riding—booted and spurred. He came in with his hat pressed down upon his brows, a hunting crop in his right hand, his left thrust deeply into his greatcoat pocket. He was livid yet; his face wore the cruel and implacable aspect he had shown when first I looked upon him from the window of the Stone House, and I had known that none whom he feared or hated might look for mercy from him. He strode in boldly, the fellows who had brought him down to us hung doubtfully in the doorway—standing back at a wave of Sir Gavin's hand. He looked upon me, and the hate he showed struck me with terror; his gaze passed from me to Mr. Bradbury and Sir Gavin—to the black box lying on the table by them, with the light of candle and lamp

playing upon its silver mountings. He said angrily, "What's this, Bradbury? Why have you sent your rogues breaking into my room, Masters? Would you lay me by the heels for a thief?"

"I would—ay, surely I would!" roared Sir Gavin, starting to his feet, and pushing forward; at Mr. Bradbury's plucking at his sleeve, he growled, purple with choler, "Ay, ay, by the Lord, if I had my way. As I will!"

"We sent for you, Charles Craike," said Mr. Bradbury swiftly, "to ask these questions of you: This man Adam Baynes—who is he? Has he risen from the dead? Or has one come back in place of Adam Baynes? Charles Craike, should not this man—of whose arrival you were warned this night—whom we think held a prisoner at the Stone House, as the lad was held by you, prove to be Richard Craike—your brother?"

My uncle answered instantly, "Bradbury, you had my answer in my father's hearing—that I've no knowledge of my brother—of his death, his disappearance, or his flight from England. The message of that hag conveyed to me no more than that her son is back again from transportation."

"Galt says the fellow died in England years since!" Sir Gavin growled.

“Galt is a liar and rogue, whom you, Sir Gavin, were you an active justice, would have clapped in gaol long since.”

“Charles Craike,” said Mr. Bradbury, seeking to restrain Sir Gavin, “you wear a brave face and use a bold tone to us for all your villainy. Whither would you ride this night?”

“Whither should I ride,” my uncle cried, “than away from this house—for London? Knowing that the boy has all—damn him!—has all that should be mine”—and still he stared at the black box lying on the table.

“You do not think to ride to London,” said Mr. Bradbury. “You think to ride to the Stone House to-night. You shall not leave the house! Sir Gavin, give orders to your men! Bid them hold the door!”

I saw my uncle leap forward; the pistol gleam in his hand; his hunting crop swing high—Sir Gavin roaring out as the two old gentlemen recoiled from him, “Galt! Any of you! Seize him!”

But the hunting crop smote down upon the lantern and the candle; instantly the room was dark; all was a confusion of rushing, struggling figures. I leaped towards the box, but was thrown back by a plunging body, and went headlong to the floor. Sir Gavin was roaring,

“Hold the door! Don’t let him go! Light! You dolts! Light!”—And I, rolling on the floor, squealed out, “The box! Look to the box! Sir Gavin, Mr. Bradbury!”

A roar of voices; a smash of glass from the window; lanterns flashing in at the door. As dazed I rose to my feet, I saw that my uncle and the box of gems were gone.

A HALF-HOUR thence we were in saddle—Sir Gavin, Mr. Bradbury, and I—and riding with the two runners, and four of Sir Gavin's servants, as swiftly as we might through the dark for the Stone House. Roger Galt had not waited for us ; but, taking horse, had ridden off immediately in pursuit of my uncle escaping with the jewels. We conjectured that Mr. Charles would not proceed now to the Stone House, but would ride for London, hoping to out-distance us, and lie hid there, till he might find a ship and escape for the Continent.

Ere we dared leave Craike House, we assured ourselves that the Haven was emptied of its rogues. My cousin Oliver remained with two of Sir Gavin's folk, to guard Miss Milne, lest any of the carrion crows fly back thither. Now fully assured from my uncle's speech and action that the Stone House held the secret of my father's disappearance from England—that, indeed, he had returned and was held a prisoner by Martin Baynes and his fellow-rogues, Mr. Bradbury,

with an activity beyond his years, was bent himself on riding thither ; I—for all my bitter chagrin that the gems should have fallen into my uncle's hands—was shaking with excitement for the thought that my father was at last come home, yet lay at the Stone House in peril of his life. The horses were gone from the stables ; my uncle had ridden away on Sir Gavin's own horse—to the justice's choler ; he must needs mount his servant's horse, and I the other fellow's.

We rode out then in the dark ; swept down the avenue, and out the open gates—the woods yet roaring about us in the straining wind, though the strength of the gale had abated.

So long as we held to the open road and to the byeways by which Roger Galt had brought me off the moors on the morn of my escape from the Stone House, we went at high speed—not pausing or drawing rein. And the wind blowing from the sea smote roundly on us ; the beating of the breakers on the cliff rolled up like thunder ; once, as we passed in view of the sea, I saw a red flash out of the blackness, and thought that, belike, the King's ship fired upon Blunt's brig ; but I could be sure of nothing for the pitch blackness or distinguish sound of cannon over the thunderous beat of the seas and crying of the wind.

Coming out on the wastes, we were compelled for the dark to go more cautiously for the broken ground ; Sir Gavin pressed on steadily a little ahead, guiding us for the Stone House. We went in silence—intent upon our purpose ; I wondering over the grim events of the long night, and dreading yet the event—that we should come too late, and that the rogues fleeing from Craike House, and black with rage at their defeat, should wreak their vengeance on my father—if indeed they held him at the Stone House—ere we might arrive.

I thought of Charles Craike flying through the night : he who had wrought this evil ; victorious yet, the plundered jewels in his possession,—the jewels for which, as surely as my grandfather, he had sold his very soul. I thought of his triumphant laughter, as he fled through the night ; I thought of all the cunning and the tricks by which he surely would escape us yet, and fly to France, and spend the treasure as he would, and where upon the Continent he would. But I thought, too, of black Roger racing grimly after through the night ; I trusted yet that he, with all his knowledge of the roads, mounted on his great horse which many a time had carried him to safety, would come up with my uncle, and take him and the treasure.

On in the dark we rode. The way over the moorlands seemed unending ; black coppice and rock, black upland appeared to join the blackness of the moonless, starless night ; the bleak winds blowing at our backs, the lash of rain now falling on our shoulders. On and on, the blackness giving place to the one greyness of clouded skies and moorlands ; the pale dawn coming.

And with the dawn we came out on the height above the Stone House, and saw it lie grey in the hollow below us ; no gleam of firelight showed from its windows ; no smoke curled up. No one was stirring ; the house seemed deserted. The baying of the hound sounded up to us. But, as we paused and drew together, Sir Gavin Masters, pointing with his whip, growled out, " They're here—some of the rogues. See the horses feeding down by the wall there "—and suddenly bellowing with triumph, " Ay, and by God, Charles Craike himself is here ; that's my nag with the saddle on its back—inside the wall ! "

Mr. Bradbury cried out sharply, " Come down, Sir Gavin ! Come down ! We dare not wait ! What may be done within ? "—and rode off apace.

Sir Gavin, following with the rest of us, gasped, " But what of Roger Galt ? What's come to the fellow ? "

Roger Galt was nigh the gateway. He stood, hatless, mired, and bleeding from a gash upon his brow, regarding his horse, lying dead on the stones before him. He was dazed yet from his fall, for, as we rode all about him, and Sir Gavin cried out, "What's chanced to you, Galt?" he stood blinking at us stupidly a moment without answering. He swept his hand across his brow then, and wiped back the blood; and muttered, "That's his work—damn him! The horse there! I come up with him at the gate. He pulled his barker on me, and I whipped out mine, and blazed at him. He's away—and his bullet's in my horse! He tried to take the London road; he couldn't get away from me in the dark. I know the dark."

"You're not hurt, Galt," cried Sir Gavin. "The fellow's like to be in the house still. Ah, the gate's open. See to your barkers, all of ye! Two of you ride to the back of the house. Come now!"

At our head then Sir Gavin rode through the gateway; we clattered after him over the cobbles and up to the house. The front door was shut fast and the windows closed; no sound and no light came from within. Sir Gavin scrambling down, we all dismounted; he, pistol in right, hunting crop in left, strode boldly up to the

door, and hammered upon it, roaring out, "Open this door! In the King's name—d'ye hear me? Open the door!"

No sound coming in answer, he turned back, and beckoning to his two fellows, ordered, "Look about ye for a log! We'll have the door down!" and while they searched about the house, again he approached the door, and beat upon it, roaring out, "Open! Open! In the King's name! Damn ye all—why don't ye open the door?"

Roger Galt came staggering up from the gates, a bludgeon in his hand. Mr. Bradbury looked carefully to his pistols. I, staring up at the barred window of the room where I had been held a prisoner, cried out suddenly and pointed upwards. For a hand had drawn aside the sacking, and my uncle stood looking down upon us. My uncle—nay, though in the greyness of the morn the face had seemed my uncle's for the instant; this face was lean and sunburnt, the eyes sunken, the grey hair was blown back by the wind. The face was gone immediately; crying out, I rushed forward to the door, as Sir Gavin's men came plunging forward with a great log between them; still crying out I know not what, I gripped it with them, and aided them propel it with a crash against the door.

Mr. Bradbury beside me was calling out, "What is it, lad? What did ye see? Who stood at the window?"

And I cried back, as again we staggered under the weight of the log, and again propelled it against the door, "My father! I think my father—held a prisoner here!"

With a crash, the rotten timbers and rusted ironwork broke before us. And we were rushing forward into the house.

The first of these is the fact that the
 number of cases of smallpox in 1891
 was 1,000, as compared with 1,500 in 1890.

The second fact is that the number of
 cases of smallpox in 1891 was 1,000,
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Chapter XXXVII. My Uncle Comes to his Own

IN the half dark of the house, as we leaped forward—Sir Gavin and I, the runners and his fellows coming scurrying after—I saw Martin Baynes and Bart spring back before us, and gain the stairway. Martin faced us there—his pistol quivering in his hand, and Bart at his back with cutlass lifted. Sir Gavin cried out, “In the King’s name! Down with your arms! Or, by God, you’ll hang for it.”

Martin spat out a curse in answer and drew trigger; at the blaze and roar of the pistol, Sir Gavin hopped smartly back; flung up his arm and fired. Martin cried out, and fell down before us. Bart, leaning forward, cutlass in hand, leaped down suddenly upon us. I, slipping aside to the wall, heard the clash of his blade upon a tough bludgeon, and the fall of one of Sir Gavin’s fellows; instantly it seemed that the runners were on Bart, and the cutlass was dragged from his hand, and clanking against the stones. I had no thought save only to mount the stair. I saw faces peering down through the

dark above me ; I knew the folk for Barwise and big Nick ; but as Sir Gavin, pushing me aside and snatching my pistol from me, plunged up the stair, they did not stay, and vanished in the dark before the door, scurrying away, I took it, to shelter in one of the rooms. I reached the stair-head ; groping in the dark, I found the key yet in the lock, and presently had the door open, and with Sir Gavin was staring into the room where I had been held those days a prisoner. There faced us a tall man, poorly-clad and travel-stained, staring at us with sombre eyes ; looking upon my father's face, I understood the tragedy of weary years of suffering and exile written upon it ; feature for feature he seemed like my uncle—yet so unlike.

He said no word as we advanced, but looked upon us dully, as without comprehension ; Sir Gavin, gasping for very breathlessness as from excitement, demanded of him, “ Who are ye ? Aren't ye Richard Craike ? ”

“ Richard Craike—yes—come from overseas, brought to this place, and gaoled here.”

I sprang forward, stretching out my hands. I cried out, “ I am John Craike—your son ! Don't you know me, father ? Don't you know me ? ”

His hands clasped mine,—rough, toil-worn

hands—all trembling ; he bent his head and stared down at me, and whispered, “ John Craike ! Ay, ay—John Craike,” in lifeless tone.

As I drew back, and stared at him in terror, Sir Gavin put his hand upon my shoulder and whispered, “ He is mazed yet, lad ; he doesn’t know you—he doesn’t understand ! Ah—they’re quiet below ”—and rushing out, roared down the stairs, “ Is all safe there ? Have you taken that rogue ? ”

“ Ay, ay, sir—we have him safe ! ” they shouted up in answer ; and Sir Gavin growling, “ Ay, but where the devil’s that villain, Charles ? ” took my father’s arm and brought him with me down the stair. Bart struggled in the grip of one runner, whilst the second bound his hands ; Roger Galt and Sir Gavin’s men were standing guard over Martin lying against the wall, and seeking to staunch the flow of blood from his shoulder ; Mr. Bradbury, pistol in hand, stood in the doorway. But Mr. Bradbury, at the sight of my father, stepped forward, crying out, “ My dear Richard ! My dear sir ! Alive and well,—that’s brave ! ”

“ Ay, ay—alive, but not too well,” growled Sir Gavin. “ He’s dazed yet—sick. Bradbury, get him out in the air ! Stay here, boy ! Leave him with Bradbury awhile. Now, you hang-

dog"—to Martin—"where the devil's Charles Craike?"

Martin cursed him bitterly in answer; Sir Gavin, approaching the door of the living-room, sought to open it; and finding it locked, cried out, "Open the door! Or by the Lord, we'll have it down! In the King's name—d'ye understand! Open it! Here, you Charles Craike—if you're in there, the game is played—d'ye hear? It's gone against you!"

I believed that I heard my uncle's voice faintly within. I heard a chair drawn back, and presently the key turn in the lock. And the door was drawn slowly open; and old Thrale, shuddering and ghastly, was looking at us.

"Out of the way!" cried Sir Gavin, and flung the door wide. "See to the stairs and doors. Let no one pass!"—and, pistol raised, he strode into the room with me at his heels.

The green curtain was drawn across the window; the room was dim in green light, as the sunrise struck against the house. I saw three figures in the room: old Thrale slinking back to the wall; Mistress Barwise, cowering in her chair by the fire; my uncle seated at the table—the black box broken open before him. I saw the blue jewels in the skull gleam dully. My uncle said no word, and did not stir in his chair.

“ Pull back the curtain ! ” cried Sir Gavin to Thrale.

Thrale’s shaking hands plucked the green curtain from before the window. The room was illumined instantly by the sun. The yellow light woke the blue jewels in the eye sockets of the skull to life, and the gems spilt from the casket on to the black flag into a many-coloured flame.

My uncle sat staring at us ; his eyes flickering, his lips smiling, blood-smeared ; his face ghastly as death. His white hands fluttered over the black silk ; touched the skull ; clawed among the jewels. He stood up from his chair ; pressed his hands against his red-stained breast, and fell forward suddenly among the gems.

“ Galt’s bullet—by God ! ” Sir Gavin cried, rushing towards him, whilst I stood trembling and aghast, and Mistress Barwise cowered by the fire, and Thrale shuddered by the wall.

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The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, founded in 1871, is a quarterly publication devoted to the advancement of the study of man in all his relations. It contains original researches, reviews, and reports on the progress of the various branches of anthropology, including physical anthropology, ethnology, and social anthropology. The Institute was founded by Sir Richard Owen, and its first meeting was held in 1871. The Journal has since become one of the most important and influential publications in the field of anthropology.

MY uncle's lips had smiled before he died, lying upon the black flag, by the death's head, among the scattered gems. It was a bitter piece of irony—well might his lips have smiled for it—that he laid hands upon the treasure only the morning of his death. For the lust of the treasure all his gifts of mind and body had been spent in vain; surely this treasure—this ill-gotten treasure—had corrupted his whole life, worked as a disorder in his blood; turned his mind to infamy and black plots against his kin, and steeled his heart to desperate purpose. He had wit as he had courage; he might have served well his King and country, and won fame and riches honourably. He had but attained his forty-fifth year; he lay there dead—his life-blood spilt among the gems, staining the fell design in silver upon his father's flag.

We rode from the Stone House—my father, Mr. Bradbury, and I—leaving Sir Gavin and his folk to bring away my uncle's body, and to march the rogues—Martin and Bart and big

Nick Barwise—off to the county gaol. But though Sir Gavin stormed and blustered, Mr. Bradbury had his way with him, that Thrale and Mistress Barwise and her man should be left free to go whither they would—so long as never again they came nigh Craike House. Mr. Bradbury would have none of these old rogues laid by the heels, and the scandal of Rogues' Haven, its master and its old servitors, noised through the kingdom. So these three were left to go their way with Mother Mag, when she should come tottering home ; what chanced to them I know not to this day ; for I was never to set eyes upon them more. Long ere I pen these words all those old rogues, who served my grandfather afloat and ashore, must surely have followed him underground.

As we rode from the Stone House, I had the black box securely in the saddle before me ; Roger Galt rode ahead of us, lest we should yet fall in with any of Blunt's men on our way back to Craike. Let me say here and now that Blunt's brig, the *Black Wasp*, slipped from the coast under cover of the storm and the darkness, eluding the revenue cutter despatched against her at the instance of Sir Gavin Masters ; no trace was found of Blunt's body and Blunt's men ; we assumed that the seamen who had come

ashore with him must have gone safely aboard. What was the truth of this, or what the end of the *Black Wasp*, I may not tell, for Blunt's brig and Blunt's men never again sailed back to the coast nigh Craike House, to my knowledge.

We rode in silence, Mr. Bradbury jaded and weary ; I, for all the perils of my sleepless night, and all the rigours of our ride to the Stone House, borne up for the joy of my father's safe return, and for the thoughts of happiness awaiting mine and me. He rode beside me—bent and broken, seeming an old man though he was not yet in his forty-eighth year, sorrowful lines about his mouth, his eyes haunted surely by the memories of his sufferings overseas. From time to time I saw him watching me intently ; his lips smiled at me when my eyes met his ; he said no word through all our ride across the sunlit moors and by the woodlands back to Craike House. Ay, the sun burned on the house that morn, lighting the sombre ivy, and flowing in through the shattered window of the dining-hall, where Evelyn Milne had spread a meal in readiness for our return.

It fell to Mr. Bradbury to draw Oliver apart, and tell him of his father's death ; my cousin said no word, but, brushing past us, left the house, and was not seen by me again that day. My father sat down with us to our meal, remaining

silent and dejected still. I watched him with increasing apprehension, dreading the result upon him of his long sufferings ; though Mr. Bradbury—now almost dropping from his chair for very weariness—sought to assure me all would yet be well.

I must have fallen asleep in my chair, and so been carried off by Sir Gavin's fellows left to guard the house ; certainly I woke to find the candles burning in my room, and the fire blazing, and to observe a figure seated in my chair—him for a moment I thought my uncle, and cried out in terror. My father rose up from his chair, and came toward me swiftly, his hands outstretched, his eyes alight now with intelligence and joy ; and his voice cried to the very heart strings of me, " John ! My lad ! My son ! "

And ere we parted that night, I had from him the story : how by my uncle's plotting he was taken out of England—seized in London, borne away to Portsmouth, and shipped aboard the *Sirius* of Captain Phillip's Fleet on the very eve of its departure for the distant clime of New South Wales. Now this Adam Baynes, in whose place he was shipped out of England, had been laid by the heels for highway-robbery and sentenced at Assizes to be transported overseas for life. Taken out of the county gaol for

conveyance to Portsmouth, he had been rescued on the road by his associates of Rogues' Haven from his bribed guards; another man had been given, bound and stunned from blows, into their keeping; this man had been borne to Portsmouth, and put aboard the prison-ship. Rogues of Rogues' Haven had carried out my uncle's plot; my uncle's guineas had surely paid; bribes and the dread of punishment had kept the mouths of the Bow Street runners shut. For many days my father had lain nigh to death aboard the *Sirius*; when his senses were restored to him, and he declared himself not Adam Baynes but Richard Craike, the master and his officers pronounced him rogue or madman, and, indeed, for his agony of thought and from the blow upon his head, he believed now that he was indeed bereft of reason for many months of the voyage out to Botany Bay. Not Captain Phillip or any of his officers believed his tale, or would send off a letter to his folk in England. He was held in bondage; toiling as any slave about the Settlement at Sydney,—for the torment of his mind and body, he told me sadly now, he was no better than a madman much of his time. But so at last he won the interest of Captain Hunter, Governor of the Colony, that slowly and by degrees he convinced him that there might be

truth in his story, so that, though hesitating, the Governor took upon himself to send him back to England, penning and forwarding to the Secretary of State a letter setting forth this case and desiring his investigation. My father had landed in London a week since; reference to the East India office, in Mr. Bradbury's absence from Town, had proved to the Secretary that he was indeed Richard Craike; he had been set instantly at liberty. And failing to find my mother at the lodging where we had dwelt in London, or to learn aught of her or me, he had come hurrying down to Craike, to fall in with Martin Baynes and Blunt's men near his home, and to be borne off a prisoner to the Stone House. He had been nigh beside himself with rage and terror, that again he should have fallen into the hands of his enemies, and be again at his brother's mercy. "Surely," he said quietly, as he wound up his tale, "my wits were wandering again this morn, that seeing my son I should not have known him my son, or Bradbury for Bradbury!"

Now, though our thoughts were only for my mother—to hurry away to Chelton and bring joy and peace to her heart, Mr. Bradbury would have us remain at Craike House, till my grandfather and my uncle were laid in their graves, and the old man's last will and testament read

to us. Indeed, Mr. Bradbury took proper credit to himself at breakfast next morning, that he had so far anticipated our wishes, that his coachboy and his coach and pair were already travelling apace for Chelton to bring my mother across country to Craike House. I found myself wondering whether my mother would credit the news conveyed in Mr. Bradbury's letter ; and whether she was not likely to suspect the hand of Charles Craike in it, and refuse to come to Craike House, whose doors she had vowed to me never again to enter. But four days thence she came.

That morn my grandfather and my uncle were borne out from Craike House to be laid in the grim vault which the old man had directed to be built for himself and his sons, nigh the village church where lay the bones of so many of our kin. Above the church the cliffs rose high ; here he had set his rock-built tomb in the sound of the sea, and in the track of the winds from the sea ; and he had placed upon its side a broad tablet of bronze, bearing the design of a ship amid great waters. All through the burial service I heard the beat of the seas on the cliff ; I thought of seas and sea winds sounding through his sleep till Judgment Day.

Now if I could feel for my grandfather no love,

or sorrow, I had before me always the recollection of him as he had faced the rogues and saved me out of their hands, and of the power of the will which had triumphed for the time over decay of mind and body ; kindled old fires in him, and conjured up odd strength,—to break and end in death.

But on my return with my father, Oliver, and Mr. Bradbury to Craike House, my thoughts were diverted instantly to the arrival of my good mother in Mr. Bradbury's coach. I sped down the steps to welcome her ; I caught her in my arms as she descended from the coach ; I led her, trembling and tearful, to the doorway where my father stood. And so I left them, and did not again approach them, till we must assemble for the reading of my grandfather's will.

We assembled in the dining-hall ; my mother seated hand in hand with my father ; my cousin Oliver, dark and sullen to all seeming as ever ; the girl Evelyn Milne,—into whose cheeks these past few days colour had seemed to steal, as light into her eyes. Mr. Bradbury, taking my grandfather's chair, would have me sit by him. The change upon the house was surely marked by the windows opened wide to the light of day. The sunlight played into the room, with sweet air scented from the flowers in the garden.

Mr. Bradbury, breaking the seals of the will, spread the parchment out before him ; cleared his throat and adjusted his spectacles. But ere he read, he said quietly, looking at my father, " My dear sir, before I read, I'd say this to you : that had you come to Craike but a few hours earlier, this will had never borne the signature of my lamented client, Mr. Edward Craike. I do assure you, sir, your father had for you a strong affection ; indeed, I feel that you alone—save in the past few weeks, your son—were dear to him."

My father bowed his head. " I do not question—I shall never question," he said, " my father's affection for me. Pray, sir, proceed."

" If you had come, sir," Mr. Bradbury went on, " you must have inherited not only Craike House and its lands, but your father's fortune—by no means represented in the contents of that strange box—the precious stones which Mr. Edward Craike, from some eccentricity of his own, would have by him always, and which, indeed, resulted from certain—ahem—trading ventures conducted by him personally abroad—would surely have passed in its entirety to you. I say this, knowing your father's affection for you, Richard. Such a will was framed by me before you left Craike House for London ; the will was revoked by my lamented client only when you

had disappeared from England, and by no investigation could we ascertain whether you were alive or dead. The second will divided my client's fortune between you and your brother Charles ; your father was at no time assured in his own mind that you were dead ; a certain resentment—inevitable resentment, I fear—that you should have deserted him wholly, dictated this later disposition of his estate. Under that will, the death of either of his sons, if proved, would have left the other sole heir to Mr. Edward Craike ; and on his father's death possessor of a fortune representing in money, in East India stock and such, and in these jewels, of not less, I should say, than two hundred thousand pounds. But Mr. Craike grew to suspect the circumstances in which the disappearance, if not the death, of his elder son had taken place."

Mr. Bradbury paused to clear his throat, and took up the will.

"A few weeks since Mr. Edward Craike had no knowledge that his elder son had married. I myself had the supreme satisfaction of meeting Mr. John Craike at Chelton—recognising him immediately from his likeness to you, Richard—and of presenting him to Mr. Edward Craike as his grandson. Ere I left the house on his reception—favourable reception—of Mr. John, Mr. Craike had

directed me to prepare a fresh will—this will—in the terms I am about to disclose to you. He desired that his grandson should remain in this house for a month, so that he might acquaint himself with him and judge his fitness to enjoy the benefits which he then contemplated bestowing on him. Mr. John Craike was happy in commending himself to his grandfather's favour. For this will, signed, witnessed, and sealed on the night of Mr. Edward Craike's death, revokes all previous wills, and leaves Mr. John Craike in possession of his grandfather's entire fortune—Craike House and lands alone passing, to be sure, in the natural order of inheritance, to you, Mr. Richard."

And though I gasped, and my mother cried out, and my father leaned forward to clasp my hand, Mr. Bradbury proceeded to read deliberately and with an obvious appreciation of legal phrases as of dry wine. "Mr. John Craike," said Mr. Bradbury, laying down the parchment at last, "I have the honour and the happiness to congratulate you," and shook hands with me, bowed, and sought his snuff-box.

I remember then blurting out that I'd take not a penny; that all should have gone to my father; and that all was his, will or no will, save only that my cousin Oliver and Miss Milne

must share. Oliver, though shaking hands with me, growled that he would take nothing from me ; Mr. Bradbury, chuckling, avowed that as trustees and guardians, Sir Gavin Masters and he would see to it that I did not dissipate my fortune ere I attained my majority. And presently I was left with only my mother and my father by me ; and we were falling to planning all that we might do with this fortune that was ours : build up the old house and its race again, and spend wisely and for the happiness of the folk about us out of the treasure which my grandfather had won in the years of his sailing.

Now I might tell our story through the years since that far sunlit afternoon, and find delight in telling. I might tell of the happiness that was ours ; I might tell how my kinsman Oliver fought with the Great Duke, and of the honours that were his ; I might tell how Roger Galt died by his side years after, at Waterloo ; I might tell how I sailed with Nelson to his dying in his most glorious *Victory*. Long ere Oliver was come back from the wars, I had quitted the sea to turn country squire, and to win Evelyn Milne, who from pale maid was grown the most desirable of brides and most adorable. I might tell——

Nay, I have set down faithfully only the story of my coming to Rogues' Haven, and all that

happened to me at my kinsman's hands. Ay, and the clock strikes midnight ; the candles burn down into their silver sticks ; through the open window of my library I see the moonlight white upon the terrace,—on the deep lawns, the flowers in the garden, even as my uncle dreamed so long ago.

His words come sounding to me from that far afternoon, when last he walked within the garden : “ I have looked from my window of a summer night, and I have seen the ghosts walk in the garden as it was, and I have known the beauty and the colour and the laughter of this garden and this house, as once they were. I have thought of the beauty of Craike House restored, the greatness of our race.”

I think almost to hear my uncle's laughter out of the moon-lit garden where his ghost may walk, and take delight in this white, scented night of summer.

THE END



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